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THE MALAYSIAN FILM CENSORSHIP BOARD

BY  
033662

This report is a study on the Malaysian  
film censorship board. It contains the detailed  
history of film censorship in Malaysia as followed by the Board,  
and a critical analysis of its guidelines. It includes in its  
content the Department of Procedure of Film  
Presentation and ANTHROPOLOGY & SOCIOLOGY Materials. A brief  
history is given in UNIVERSITY MALAYA complete.

KUALA LUMPUR

1980/81

## PREFACE

What are the effects of films on their audience is an often asked question. So is it often asked as to why the Censorship of Films been too lax or too extreme, in some cases. In the Malaysian Context this has very well been the talk of the table after a good night's show. There is often misunderstandings amongst different people as to why, 'such and such a scene' was not censored or why 'such and such a scene' was censored, how the censors operate and what are their value judgements. Sometimes these differences in understanding the criteria of Censorship becomes the underlying factor in anger arousal among ardent fans of the screen.

To dispel some of these notions, this study was undertaken and would come in useful.

I am not of the opinion that the Censors are right wholly nor am I advocating the arguments against them by the public. I have tentatively tried to separate the two worlds, first by giving the guidelines of the Censors (the Censors viewpoint) and its impact on society (the public viewpoint). The second is in the form of an argument for or against the different situations as given in the guidelines. Finally I have given my opinion as to where to draw the line, especially in the Malaysian Context. With this I hope at least some of the differences between the Censors and the public will be cleared.

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## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This study done on the Censor Board was made possible by many persons who have either directly or indirectly helped me in the course of the research.

I owe my greatest debt to my supervisor, Associate Professor Zainal Kling with whom I had an open discussion during a dinner concerning the limitations of such a study which is not much known by the public and who in turn helped me through to the Malaysian Censorship Board.

I owe my thanks in no small manner to Encik Rahmad bin Siru, the Secretary of the Censorship Board who was kind and patient to bear with my interruptions during his busy hours. I appreciate and thank him for helping me to see the study finish without shortcomings. Here I would also like to thank the Staff of the Board for giving me tips on the system.

My thanks also go to the typist Miss Belinda Tan S.H. for her help to put this study in type.

I would like to thank all others not mentioned above but who have helped me in the course of my study for their kind provision of time and effort.

## CONTENTS

	Page
CHAPTER IV - A CRITIQUE AND COMMENT ON FILM CENSORSHIP, TOGETHER WITH A COMPARISON OF FILM CLASSIFICATION WITH SOME OTHER COUNTRIES ...	60
PREFACE ...	(i)
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS ...	(ii)
CONTENTS ...	(iii)
LIST OF FIGURES ...	62
LIST OF APPENDIX ...	63
CHAPTER I - ITS AIMS, METHOD, PROBLEMS AND LIMITATIONS ...	1
The Study and Its Objectives ...	1
Methods of Research ...	2
Problems Encountered ...	3
Limitations ...	3
CHAPTER II - THE ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE OF THE MALAYSIAN CENSORSHIP BOARD INCLUDING ITS BRIEF HISTORY ...	5
Brief History ...	5
Ministry of the Home Affairs in Relation to the Board ...	8
(1) The Board of Film Censors ...	10
(ii) Procedure of Presenting Films to the Board ...	12
(iii) The Committee of Appeal ...	17
(iv) The Assessment Committee ...	20
(v) The Administrative Function ...	27
CHAPTER III - THE CRITERIA: FILM CENSORSHIP, THE PRINCIPLES AND THE GUIDELINES ...	36
(1) The Criterion of Censorship ...	36
(ii) Censorable Material ...	39
Conclusion ...	57



## LIST OF FIGURES

Page

CHAPTER IV	- A CRITIQUE AND COMMENT ON FILM CENSORSHIP, TOGETHER WITH A COMPARISON OF FILM CLASSIFICATION WITH SOME OTHER COUNTRIES ...	60
1	The Organisational Chart of the (M.C.B.) from 1.6.1974 to 1.6.1975 ...	60
	Classification of Film Censorship ...	60
	Australia ... ..	60
2	The Organisational Chart of the (M.C.B.) from 1.6.1974 to 1.6.1975 ...	61
	India ... ..	61
	United Kingdom ... ..	62
	The Need for Film Classification in Malaysia	63
	(1) The Study by the Assessment Committee .	64
	(2) A Critical Comment ... ..	67
CHAPTER V	- THE FILMIC IMPACT: IN RELATION TO CENSORSHIP GUIDELINES AND THE MALAYSIAN SOCIETY . ...	77
	The Film as an Art ... ..	77
	The Influence of an interesting theme on Children ... ..	79
	The Influence of a New Culture (The Adolescent) . ... ..	82
	Censorship and the Malaysian View (A Comment)	85
APPENDIXES	... ..	92
REFERENCES	... ..	106

## LIST OF FIGURES

Figure		Page
<u>Appendix</u>		<u>Page</u>
1	The Organizational Chart of the (M.C.B.) from 1.6.1966 to 1.4.1974 ... ..	7
	DI TAPIS DARI 1966-1972 ... ..	92
2	The Organizational Chart of the (M.C.B.) as from 1.4.1974 to date ... ..	9
	DI TAPIS UNTUK TAHUN 1975 ... ..	93
	LEMBAGA PENAPIS FILM, MALAYSIA BILANGAN FILM DI TAPIS UNTUK TAHUN 1976 ... ..	94
	LEMBAGA PENAPIS FILM, MALAYSIA BILANGAN FILM DI TAPIS UNTUK TAHUN 1977 ... ..	95
	LEMBAGA PENAPIS FILM, MALAYSIA BILANGAN FILM DI TAPIS UNTUK TAHUN 1978 ... ..	95
2	KEPUTUSAN RAYUAN UNTUK TAHUN 1975 ... ..	96
	KEPUTUSAN RAYUAN UNTUK TAHUN 1976 ... ..	97
	KEPUTUSAN RAYUAN UNTUK TAHUN 1977 ... ..	97
	KEPUTUSAN RAYUAN UNTUK TAHUN 1978 ... ..	98
	KEPUTUSAN RAYUAN UNTUK TAHUN 1979 ... ..	98
3	KEPUTUSAN PENILAIAN UNTUK TAHUN 1974-1979 ... ..	99
4	SOURCE OF INCOME (\$) OF CINEMAS IN KUALA LUMPUR (1978) ... ..	100
5	PROFITS EARNED BY THEATRES IN KUALA LUMPUR (1978) ... ..	101
6	FEDERAL REVENUE FROM THE FILM INDUSTRY ... ..	102
7	LETTER BY PROFESSOR DR. TAN ENG SEONG ... ..	103



## LIST OF APPENDIX

Appendix

## ITS AIMS, METHOD, PROBLEMS AND LIMITATIONS

## Page

1	LEMBAGA PENAPIS FILEM, MALAYSIA BILANGAN FILEM DI TAPIS DARI 1966-1972 ... ..	92
	LEMBAGA PENAPIS FILEM, MALAYSIA BILANGAN FILEM DI TAPIS UNTUK TAHUN 1975 . ... ..	93
	LEMBAGA PENAPIS FILEM, MALAYSIA BILANGAN FILEM DI TAPIS UNTUK TAHUN 1976 . ... ..	94
	LEMBAGA PENAPIS FILEM, MALAYSIA BILANGAN FILEM DI TAPIS UNTUK TAHUN 1977 . ... ..	95
	LEMBAGA PENAPIS FILEM, MALAYSIA BILANGAN FILEM DI TAPIS UNTUK TAHUN 1978 . ... ..	95
2	KEPUTUSAN RAYUAN UNTUK TAHUN 1975	96
	KEPUTUSAN RAYUAN UNTUK TAHUN 1976	97
	KEPUTUSAN RAYUAN UNTUK TAHUN 1977	97
	KEPUTUSAN RAYUAN UNTUK TAHUN 1978	98
	KEPUTUSAN RAYUAN UNTUK TAHUN 1979	98
3	KEPUTUSAN PENILAIAN UNTUK TAHUN 1974-1979	99
4	SOURCE OF INCOME (%) OF CINEMAS IN KUALA LUMPUR (1978) ... ..	100
5	PROFITS EARNED BY THEATRES IN KUALA LUMPUR (1978) ... ..	101
6	FEDERAL REVENUE FROM THE FILM INDUSTRY ... ..	102
7	LETTER BY PROFESSOR DR. TAN ENG SEONG ... ..	103

opinion of the people can or CHAPTER I accepted by the Board (common sense attitude).

## ITS AIMS, METHOD, PROBLEMS AND LIMITATIONS

### Methods of Research

#### The Study and Its Objectives

This study outlines in brief and in descriptive form the organizational structure of the Malaysian Censorship Board. This is given in Chapter II and together with it comes a brief history of the Board, to date. Chapter III deals briefly on the basic and main criteria of film censorship and finally in Chapter IV is given a critical outlook on the criteria's guidelines.

This piece of study stems from a desire to understand the principles and criteria of film censorship in Malaysia. Why is there so much talk over the censors decisions and is there justification for it. Misunderstandings by the layman is often obvious to the academic. Though in the field of sociology the common sense sociological analysis often ties with the results of a well organised social study, it becomes non-valid because the ordinary mansard and observation of the frequencies of happenings, even if as well as the sociologist, is usually used by him to generalise his observations as true for the total social system. Only at these points do the academics in sociology differ from the 'common sense sociology'. He proves that the 'Empirical Social reality' is often in conflict with common sense understanding. To find out whether these two poles have a widespread effect, especially in the field of censorship, I decided to do a study on the Censorship Procedure (social reality) and why the



opinion of the people can or cannot be accepted by the Board (common sense attitude).

### Methods of Research

The source of the major part of this study comes from the Malaysian Censorship Board where I met personnel involved in the Censorship Procedure everyday. Much information was obtained from the Secretary of the Board, who also introduced me to the other staffs and showed me around. Opinions were taken from the staff but mainly from the Secretary who has to verify these and other credentials, who thus takes the place of an official spokesman. The Secretary who has been attached to the Board from 1966 is well versed in the Boards Administration.

Relevant material was collected from the Board archives where the files and minutes of meetings are kept. The Board also publishes an annual called "Laporan Tahunan Lembaga Penapis Malaysia". This was used to collect statistics relevant to the study. In brief Chapter II consists mainly material from the files of the Board and the Akta No. 35 1952. Chapter III consists of materials from the minutes of meetings of the censors as well as an indepth interview with the Board Secretary. The Library at the University of Malaya was much helpful in providing material for Chapter IV. The critique and comment would not have been possible if not for the relevant books obtainable at the Library. Official statistics and other materials on the Censorship Board was also got from the Newspapers, past thesis and the Statistics Department, Malaysia.

### Problems Encountered

There were problems encountered during the course of this study. Though they did not affect the totality of this piece of research it did however hinder certain necessary information. This was rectified to a certain extent by referring to other materials and interviewing the Secretary of the Board.

The main problems include, permission not being granted to interview the censors in the Board. The only person who is admitted to be interviewed is the Board Chairman who is the spokesman for all the members. All form of questions and requests have to go through the Secretary who as far as possible takes it on his own to give the necessary information. Members of the Staff, though they may provide information cannot be accepted as an authority on any subject and thus academically they cannot be quoted. There was also the difficulty in getting the right files at the right time and some files were misplaced and could not be traced.

### Limitations

The limitations of this study is entirely on material existing in the Censorship Board and the University Library. Thus the scope is very limited and the interpretation could be affected. Further, the Secretary of the Board acted akin to a "key informant" makes the difference in this study because he and those around him could be heavily inclined to personal beliefs that could be alike. This was overcome to a certain extent however, by gathering verbal opinion from a few of the staffs.



Much interest and important information has been classified due to security reasons thus they cannot be verified by anyone interested in gaining further information on this field.

Missing files contributed to a reduction of detailed information in Chapter II on the guidelines of Censorship. Examples were thus very much reduced because many synopsis' on films banned could not be traced.

The major limitation of this study lies in the lack of comparison especially in Chapter II due to material not available to construct a comparison. It cannot be denied that these material do exist but the time, effort and finance needed to carry out a detailed study is not within my means to do so. It can be seen in Chapter II that only a descriptive account is given. This is because a critical analysis would entail a comparison of other organizational structures of other Censorship Boards and they were not available within scope.

Any shortcomings in this study is deeply regretted but whatever is given is explained without prejudice or bias so leaving others enough material to pursue an interest in this field any other study or research.

The Board was still governed by the 'Cinematograph Films (Censorship) Act, 1952'. This New Board continued in the same process and structure till amendments were made to the Act in 1974 when the Board was restructured.

The composition of the Board as when established

## CHAPTER II

### THE ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE OF THE MALAYSIAN CENSORSHIP BOARD INCLUDING ITS BRIEF HISTORY

#### Brief History

The first Board of Film Censors was established on the 8th January 1954 under the Film Censorship Act No. 35, 1952. It consisted of five members including the Chairman, who were from both the Federation as well as Singapore. In addition to the Board, there was established a separate committee of appeal which included twelve members in Malaya and seven members in the committee of Singapore. This set up was confirmed till after independence up to 1966 when Singapore was given her separation from Malaysia. The Board which was then situated in Singapore was separated as well to establish a New Board of Film Censors in Malaysia.

On the 3rd March 1966, the New Board of Film Censors was set up at the Film Negara Building at Jalan Utara, Petaling Jaya. Functioning for the Ministry of Home Affairs, it carried out the same functions of viewing films coming into Malaysia and censoring them if necessary, before they are passed for screening in the theatres of Malaysia. The Board was still governed by the 'Cinematograph Films (Censorship) Act, 1952'. This New Board continued in the same process and structure till amendments were made to the Act in 1974 when the Board was restructured.

The composition of the Board as when established



in Malaysia up to the amendments in 1974 consisted of a Chairman and six censors and an Assistant censor. They were then, government servants who were paid and who worked full-time. They were appointed by the Duli Yang Maha Mulia Seri Paduka Baginda Yang Di-Pertuan Agong. The Chairman was also the Head of Department and a member of the Board. The Board included:

- 1 censor for Malay and Indonesian films
- 1 censor for English films
- 1 censor for Chinese films
- 1 censor for Tamil films
- 1 censor for Television Programmes
- 1 Assistant censor

The Board was complete with technicians and Administrative Staff all working under the Supervision of the Head of Department.

The Organizational Chart of the Board as from 1st June 1966 to the 1st April 1974 is as shown in Fig. 1.

Amendments came into effect to the Cinematograph Films (Censorship) Act, effective from the 1st April 1974 after being revised in 1974. The New Board which was still under the Ministry of Home Affairs came directly under the Ministers supervision. This Board consists of eight members including the Chairman. On the 1st of June the same year, six more members were appointed including one Vice-Chairman making it fourteen members strong. Under the new regulations it was stated clearly,

Act 35: Section 3(1). Amended 1974:

The Organizational Chart of the (M.C.B.) from 1.6.1966 to 1.4.1974

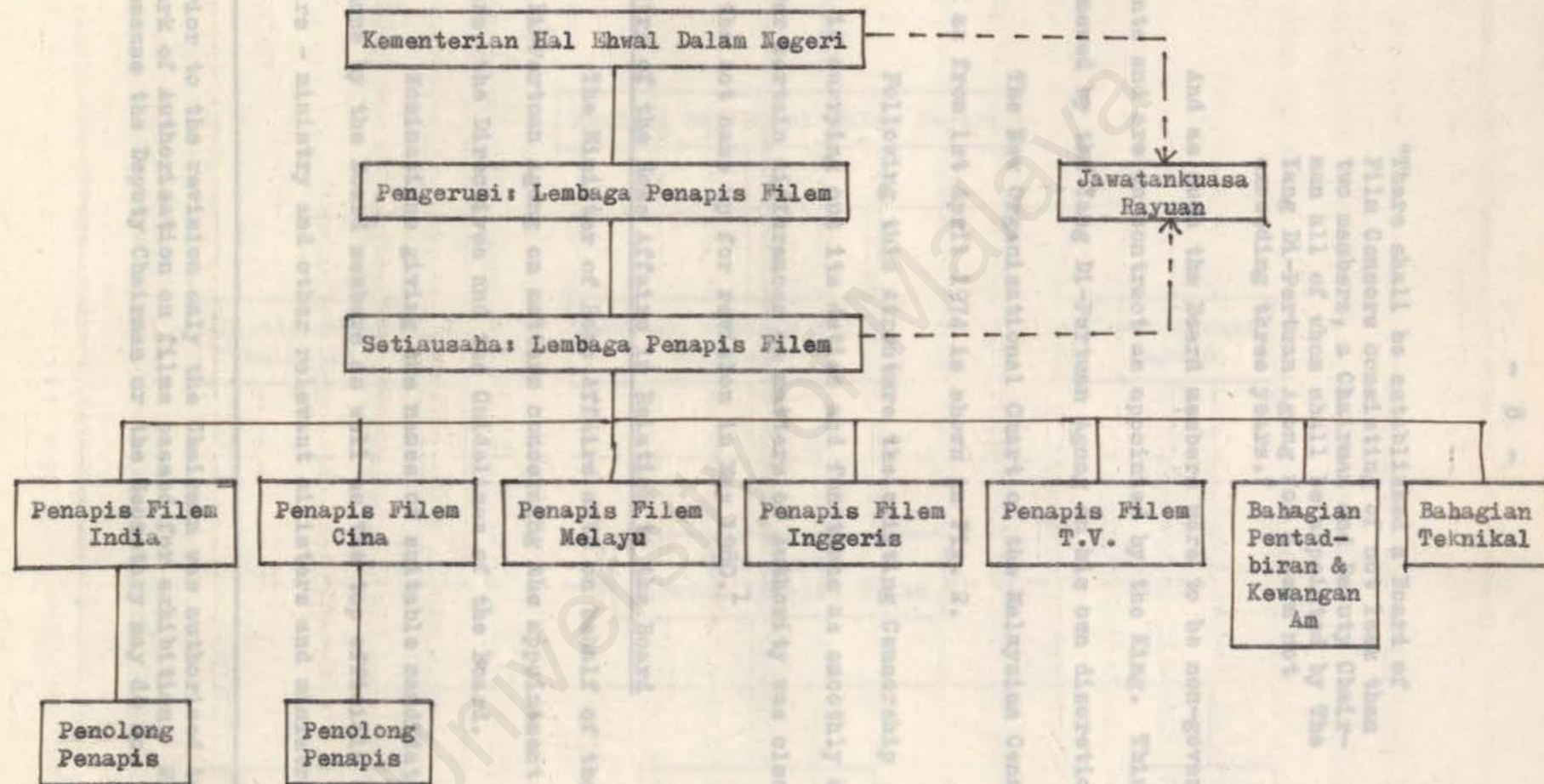


Fig. 1



"There shall be established a Board of Film Censors consisting of not less than two members, a Chairman and Deputy Chairman all of whom shall be appointed by The Yang Di-Pertuan Agong for a term not exceeding three years."

And as such the Board members were to be non-government servants and are on contract as appointed by the King. This term can be renewed by the Yang Di-Pertuan Agong on his own discretion.

The New Organizational Chart of the Malaysian Censorship Board as from 1st April 1974 is shown in Fig. 2.

Following this structure the existing Censorship Board is carrying out its duties and functions as smoothly as possible. However certain differences on matters of Authority was cleared out when the Act came up for revision in May 1980.<sup>1</sup>

#### Ministry of the Home Affairs in Relation to the Board

The Minister of Home Affairs acts on behalf of the Yang Di-Pertuan Agong on matters concerning the appointment of Board members, the Directives and the Guidelines of the Board.

Nominations giving the names of suitable candidates are done by the Board members as well as the top officials of the Home Affairs - ministry and other relevant ministers and ministries. The

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1 Prior to the revision only the Chairman was authorised to sign the Mark of Authorisation on films passed for exhibition. Now in his absense the Deputy Chairman or the Secretary may do so.

The Organizational Chart of the (M.C.B.) as from 1.4.1974 to date

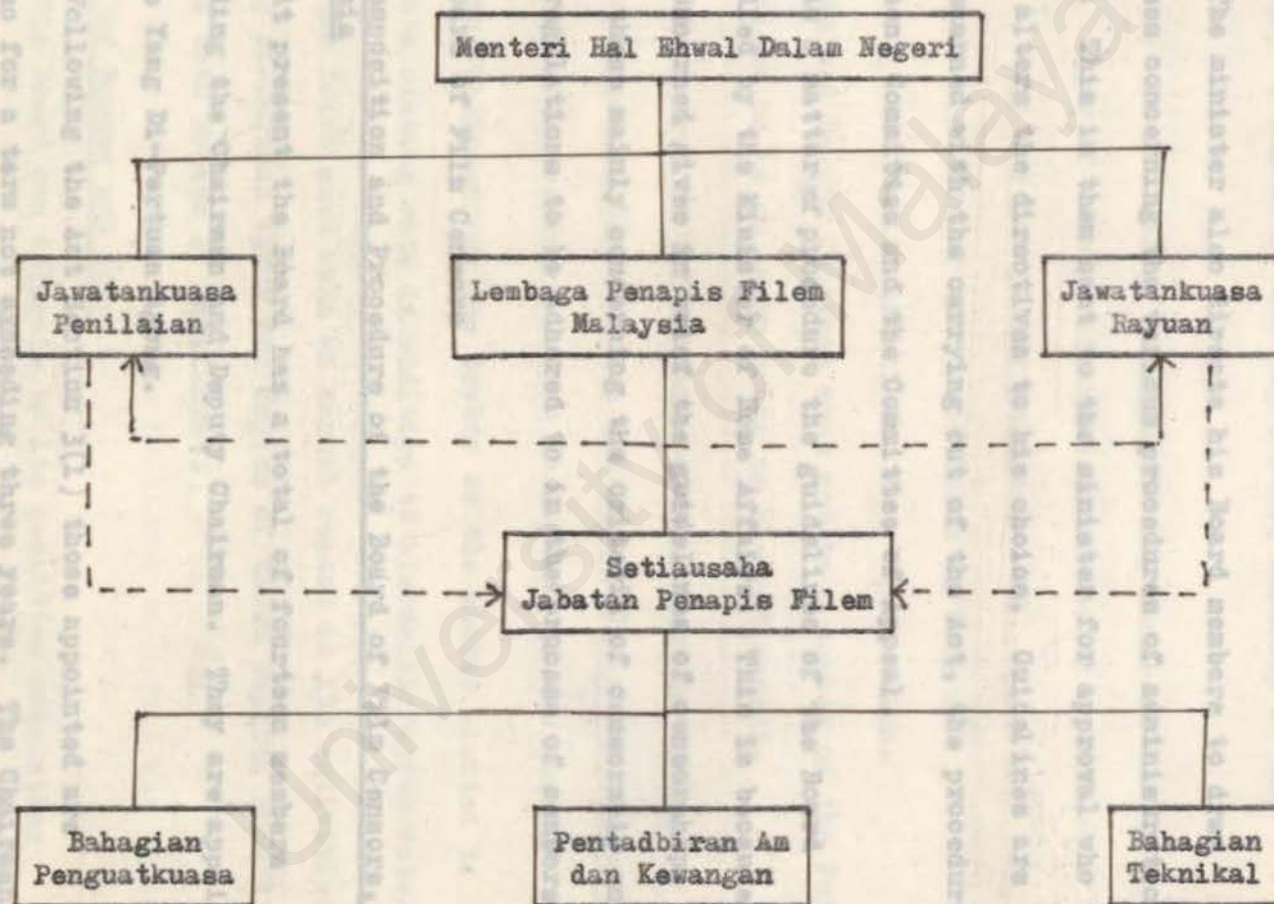


Fig. 2



names are then submitted to the minister who then proceeds to short-list and choose these deemed suitable for appointment by the Yang Di-Pertuan Agong.

The minister also directs his Board members to draw up guidelines concerning the various procedures of administration and censorship. This is then sent to the minister for approval who then accepts or alters the directives to his choice. Guidelines are usually concerned with the carrying out of the Act, the procedure of the Assessment Committee and the Committee of Appeal.

As a matter of procedure the guidelines of the Board too is handled by the Minister of Home Affairs. This is because the minister concerned gives in brief the guidelines of censorship, especially those mainly concerning the criteria of censorship and the rules and regulations to be adhered to in the process of censorship.

(i) The Board of Film Censors

The Composition and Procedure of the Board of Film Censors, Malaysia

At present the Board has a total of fourteen members including the Chairman and Deputy Chairman. They are appointed by the Yang Di-Pertuan Agong.

Following the Act Section 3(1) those appointed are

done so for a term not exceeding three years. The Chairman, Deputy Chairman and members may resign at any time and shall vacate his office if his appointment is revoked, but he may be

reappointed. The members of the Board are not to be:-

- (a) a member of either House of Parliament
- (b) a member of the Legislative Assembly of the State
- (c) an officer or employee of any local authority or of a body corporate or authority established by law for public purpose; or
- (d) a member of the trade union or body or association affiliated to a trade union.

The Chairman and Deputy Chairman must not be a member of the Public Services unless he is on leave prior to his retirement.

The quorum at all meetings of the Board is three and in the absence of the Chairman and Deputy Chairman, the members may elect among themselves a person to preside at the meeting.

The Chairman or the Deputy or the member elected to preside has a casting vote in addition to his deliberative vote.

The Board must make an annual report on its activities to the Yang Di-Pertuan Agong and copies of these reports should be laid before both Houses of Parliament.

#### Delegation of Powers and Duty

The Board can delegate to its committee consisting of any three members either generally or in a particular case all or any of its powers conferred and duties imposed upon them. This delegation is subject to the condition that it does not debar the



Board from the exercise of any power or performance of any duty so delegated. When such a delegation is imminent the Chairman may appoint any member to be the Chairman of the Committee. and place as the Board may appoint.

7. This Committee is lawful upon all decisions made and shall be signed by the secretary save that decision of the mark to be affixed to any film authorising the exhibition of the film in Malaysia which shall be signed by the Chairman.

(ii) Procedure of presenting Films to the Board

1. The owner of any film produced in Malaysia should within fourteen days of completion of the production deposit the film in a warehouse approved for the purpose by the Board.

2. No film or parts of it should on importation be removed from customs control without a permit which is valid only to the term specified on the permit.

3. Every film or its parts should be deposited by the importer in a warehouse as above.

4. Whoever without the permission of the Board in writing does not follow the above regulations is guilty of an offence and on conviction is liable to a fine not exceeding \$1,000/-.

5. This regulation does not cover those films which have been authorised for exhibition in Malaysia and which bear a valid mark affixed on it.

6. Every film to be presented to the Board for exhibition in Malaysia should be presented for the purpose of censorship at the owners' risk and expense and at such time and place as the Board may appoint.

7. The owner may with the permission of the Board remove any film from the place of deposition for the purpose of excision and must return it within forty-eight hours, to the same place and all excised parts must be delivered within that time to the Censorship Board.

After presentation of the film or excised parts of films to the Board, it may:-

1. Refuse to authorise the exhibition of the film in Malaysia.
2. Approve the film for exhibition with such alterations or excisions as it may require.
3. Approve the film for exhibition in Malaysia without alteration or excision.

In case of 1 and 2 above, the Board must furnish in writing to the owner, its reasons for the refusal or for requiring the alterations or excisions, and in cases of 2 and 3 approval is given by the Chairman by affixing the mark of approval and classifying the film accordingly.

When alterations or excisions to films are required by the Board, the alterations or excisions may be made either:-



1. by the Board; or the film and gives a full
2. by the owner with the consent of the Board, on condition that all films and excised parts forthwith be returned to the Board within forty-  
(d) eight hours.

If alterations and excisions are to be made by the Board, the Committee of Censors sitting to view the films gives a directive to the technicians after making a decision on the parts to be censored. The technicians then proceed to cut, delete, or alter the films at the required places.

#### Films Exempted from Presentation

The Board of Film Censors deal on conditions that they are subject by law to be submitted those films that are:-

- (a) not any film sponsored by the Federal Government or the Government of any State.
- (b) not any film transhipped within Malaysia for delivery at a place outside Malaysia.
- (c) not any film, whether produced in or imported into Malaysia which the owner does not intend to exhibit<sup>2</sup> in Malaysia, provided that the Board is notified in writing that he does not

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2 Exhibition: where a film is being viewed by more than twelve persons.

intend to exhibit the film and gives a full description of the film. This immunity is for a period of only one month from the date of production of the film or on its importation.

- (d) Any film not being obscene or lewd which any person or his agent possesses is intended for his own private use and not for the purpose of sale, hire, distribution, public exhibition or circulation so long as the film remains in such possession.
- (e) any film sponsored by the Federal Government pursuant to a treaty agreement to which the government is a party.
- (f) any film that has been brought into this country by diplomatic immunity.

Exceptions to the above films stated above, all films are under the jurisdiction of the film Censorship Board. No exemptions are made for films that are exhibited to the public by embassies and commissions even if these films are those brought in by diplomatic immunity.

Appendix 1 shows the number of films handled by the Board from 1974-1979 and the decision heretofore made on them.



(111) Classification of Film Subject to Censorship

Cond: Prior to 1971, all films were classified as fit for general audiences and were issued the Certificate of General Audience.

Between the years 1971 and 1973, two classifications were introduced one being the General Audience Certificate and the other classified as Pink Certificate commonly known as 'X' films for audiences above the age of eighteen. After 1973, the Pink Certificate films were automatically classified as material to be banned and therefore the Pink Certificate was revoked leaving as it was before 1971.

Type of Films Censored

8 mm films with sound

8 mm films without sound

16 mm films

35 mm films

70 mm films

Video tapes

All other film that may be outside these types mentioned for use in projectors or video machines are also censored following the procedures of presentation and censorship.

The members of the Committee of Appeal will select

(iii) The Committee of Appeal

Conditions for Appeal

As in any other circumstance, any person aggrieved or is not satisfied with the decision of the Board, is authorised to appeal to the Appeal Committee. He may do so within thirty days from the day he is notified of the Board's decision. Together with his appeal he is required to send in a fee as may be prescribed by the Committee. He can send in also together with the appeal any representation, by attaching it to the notice. For this purpose the owner should deliver to the Secretary any film or part of it at such time and place as the Secretary may direct.

Composition of the Committee of Appeal

- (a) It consists of eighteen persons of which the Chairman is to be appointed by the Yang Di-Pertuan Agong.
- (b) The Inspector General of Police or a Police Officer of or above the rank of A.S.P. nominated by him.
- (c) An officer appointed by the Minister.
- (d) The Chief Education Advisor or an Officer of the Education Department nominated for the Department; and
- (e) Fourteen members to be nominated by the Minister and appointed by the Yang Di-Pertuan Agong.

The members of the Committee of Appeal will elect

3 Due to missing files, the name of the film could not be traced.



one of their members to be Vice-Chairman and in his absence or the Chairmans' the committee elects any of its members to preside it. The Quorum of the Appeal Committee is six and in the case of equal voting the Chairman, Vice-Chairman or the member presiding in the former's place has a casting vote. The Committee is empowered to:-

1. Approve the exhibition of any film which is the subject of the appeal.

2. The excision or retention of any film subject of the appeal; and

3. The classification of any film.

The Committee if after rejecting the appeal feels that the appeal was frivolous or vexatious it may impose a further fee in addition to the fee imposed, or order the forfeiture of any sum deposited before. The decision of the Committee is then communicated to the Chairman of the Board who shall then if necessary affix the mark of Authorisation or alter or delete it as the case may be.

#### Complaints to the Committee of Appeal

To date many films have come up to the Committee of Appeal for revision of the decision of the Board. One such film that was viewed by the Committee for appeal against the decision to the Board and which was 'passed clean' against cuts was a Hindi Film.<sup>3</sup> A Chinese documentary named "The Wall has two sides" was

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3 Due to missing files, the name of the film could not be traced.

viewed by the Committee and it not only upheld the decision of the Board but also felt that this film cannot be passed merely with cuts and therefore authorised it to be banned. The film 'Godfather' which was passed with cuts was before it could be exhibited called back (iv) The Assessment Committee to the Committee of Appeal and after deliberation was classified as material to be banned. The Assessment Committee came into existence on the 25th May 1972, after request from the Yang Di-Pertuan Agong

#### Reasons for Appeal

- (1) Commercial: The foremost reason for appeal is seen in terms of profits for the film distributors. The film owners feel that the fee of \$50/- they subscribe for the viewing committee as negligible compared to the profits that can be reaped if the film were to be 'passed clean' or 'passed with cuts' rather than incur losses due to its classification as material to be banned.
- (2) Others: Among other reasons which include public emotions and sentiments, appeal has also been made by government or under the guise of its authority. 'Godfather' was forwarded to the Committee of Appeal by the Minister of Home Affairs. Tan Sri Ghazali Shafiee, on grounds of internal security.<sup>4</sup> However to what extent this decision was not influenced by authority, can only be conjectured.

Appeals other than those stated above are also

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4 See Chapter on Criterion of Censorship (3) Crime under "ingredients censors look for in crime films". Source: Classified.



received by the Secretary of the Board and the Validity and Justification of the Appeal is looked into and conferred, among the Board members before they are acted on.

(iv) The Assessment Committee

The Assessment Committee came into existence on the 25th May 1972, after request from the Yang Di-Pertuan Agong during the opening session of the Second Seating of Parliament in the third term (9th May 1972). On 19th May 1972, the Deputy Minister of Home Affairs asked the Parliament for the setting up of a Special Committee to assess the films that have come into question.

The films that then came into question and which was widely debated in the mass media, concerned those classified under the red certificate or more commonly known as the 'X' films. The classifying of these films, thus making them exhibitable, stirred up the emotions of a section of the public who complained of the screening of such films on grounds of morality obscenity and after effects of these films.

When set up on the 25th May, the Assessment Committee was assigned to:

- (a) Investigate and get the opinion of the public either orally or written as to whether these films that have disturbed certain sections of the public should be continued screening.

(b) To submit a report and opinion to the

May 1972. 'Dewan' after finishing the study; and

(c) To view the result and effects of such  
films on the social, moral, cultural and  
economic aspects of society.

The Assessment Committee which was set up consisted of

Dewan Rakyat members as follows:-

- (a) Yang Berhormat, Dato' Haji Mohamed bin Yaakob, Deputy Minister of Home Affairs as Chairman
- (b) Yang Berhormat, Tuan Lee Seck Fun
- (c) Yang Berhormat, Dato' Musa bin Hitam
- (d) Yang Berhormat, Tan Sri Syed Nasir bin Ismail
- (e) Yang Berhormat, Dr. Awang bin Hassan
- (f) Yang Berhormat, Tuan Hassan bin Haji Sulaiman
- (g) Yang Berhormat, Tuan Chan Siang Sun
- (h) Yang Berhormat, Tuan T.S. Gabriel
- (i) Yang Berhormat, Puan Bibi Aishah binti Hamid Don
- (j) Yang Berhormat, Tuan Pengiran Tahir bin Pengiran Patara
- (k) Yang Berhormat, Tuan Latip bin Haji Dris
- (l) Yang Berhormat, Tuan Peter Paul Dason
- (m) Yang Berhormat, Tuan Loh Jee Mee
- (n) Yang Berhormat, Tuan Haji Yusuf bin Haji Abdullah
- (o) Yang Berhormat, Tuan Mohammad Daud bin Abdul Samad
- (p) Yang Berhormat, Tuan Luhut Wan
- (q) Yang Berhormat, Datuk S.P. Seenivasagam
- (i) Yang Berhormat, Tuan Yeoh Teck Chye



The Committee held its first meeting on the 25th May 1972. Work was carried out by:-

- (1) Getting the opinion of the people
- (2) Getting the opinion of groups
- (3) Organising Seminars to get opinions
- (4) Asking interested parties to send memorandums.

The Committee also had conferences with officials

(1) A big section of our society is against the screening and exhibiting of films containing sex which portrays obscene sexual behaviour either explicitly or implicitly by covering it up in the way of life of characters in the film.

(2) A section of our society does not appreciate portrayal of excessive violence, crime and the happy-go-lucky life incorporating drug abusing behaviour.

of the Ministry of Home Affairs, Chairman of the Board of Film Censors and the film importers, distributors and exhibitors. The Committee was also made available, some 'X' films to decide for themselves whether these films should be released for exhibition. Among those screened and viewed by the Committee included "The Beggar", "Virgin on the Verge", "Fengo", "Rakit", "Labryinth of Love", "Naked Wind from the Sea", "I A Woman", "Making It", "Seduction of Inja", "Love Me Baby, Love Me", "Touch of Zen", "Cast of Thousand Virgins" and "Mask of Ghost".

When the study was finally completed, after looking into these special aspects of the Malaysian Film Industry:-

- (a) Complaints received that the effects of such
- (b) The effects of such films society will not be
- (c) Film Censorship in Malaysia
- (d) Film Censorship in other countries give any
- (e) The Feasibility of Censorship of such films
- (f) The type of films coming in entertainment

for the viewers.

(g) The Film Industry in Malaysia

(h) The change in the contemporary films

(i) The choice of films the public likes

(j) Laws regarding Film Censorship

(k) Laws regarding film exhibition

The Committee was of the opinion, after deliberation over a period of meetings that:-

- (1) A big section of our society is against the screening and exhibiting of films concerning sex which portrays obscene sexual behaviour either explicitly or implicitly by covering it up in the way of life of characters in the film.
- (2) A section of our society does not appreciate portrayal of excessive violence, crime and the 'hippy' way of life incorporating drug abusing behaviour.
- (3) Although from the viewpoint of economy and tax revenue, the government may reap greater benefits, they agreed that the effects of such films on the Malaysian Society will not be worthwhile the efforts.
- (4) The films in question, now, do not give any benefit to the public in terms of educational value, but only act as cheap entertainment for the viewers.



teaching of science and technology such as forestry, medication, family planning and psychiatric treatment. Also exempted are those not been any scientific study or at least in academic, they believe with a motive of education and the well being of a family such as it is very likely that these films could:-

- (1) Spoil teenagers and youths in terms of generating their morality.
- (2) Implant bad behaviour, dirty and wild social habits and can spoil the serenity of the way of life changing them into rough and unmannered people without a basic moral aim.
- (3) Not only affect them morally and socially but also give a bad and significant mental and psychological disorientation to this society, especially the youths.

After stating these reasons the Committee decided upon banning the films that were classified under the Pink Certificate and as such said:-

"Memandangkan kepada akibat-akibat yang boleh timbul dengan penayangan filem-filem sex dan filem-filem ganas yang berluas-luasan demi, menjaga kesopanan maruah, ketenteraman dan keselamatan rakyat negeri ini, Jawatankuasa berpendapat bahawa kerajaan hendaklah mengharamkan memasukkan dan penayangan filem-filem sex jenayah dan keganasan seperti yang terdapat sekarang; kecuali filem-filem jenis yang berikut ..."

The exceptions given were to sex films that are beneficial scientifically and which has a relationship with the

teaching of science and technology such as therapy, medication, family planning and psychiatric treatment. Also exempted are those with a motive of education and the well being of a family such as husband and wife relationship. Exemptions were also given to very violent films that serve in the interest of history such as films depicting war and battles or violent historical incidents. However the stated films must be censored and heavily 'guarded' when exhibited.

To control these interests, the Committee suggested changes to the Censorship Board and the members eligible for censorship of such films. Changes included:-

- (a) A Chief Censor who is also the Chairman
- (b) An Assistant Censor
- (c) The conditions of the eight members should be as follows:

- (i) all must be people born in Malaysia and who understand the social and moral situations of this country.

- (ii) all must be appointed by the Yang

Di Pertuan Agong, accepted by the Minister of Home Affairs.

- (iii) appointments are made and not chosen by the Public Services Commission.

- (iv) at least three members must be women.

- (v) at least three must be present for



censorship of any one film.

- (vi) Each and every censor must be given the opportunity to express his/her own opinion without having his/her personal interests getting involved.

All censorship at present has to be carried out as it is except that which involves the case of the Pink Certificates which must be handed over to the Sub-Committee Censorship Board as above and following the guidelines set by the Assessment Committee.

#### The Suggestions of the Assessment Committee

The Assessment Committee suggested that to have a Competent Censorship Code the structure of the Assessment Committee should be maintained but the members be changed every two years. That all the films released for exhibition be gazzetted and that all advertisements and trailers be displaced accordingly.

The Assessment Committee was of the view that the banning or restricted showing of violent and sex filled films are not only the means by which society is affected but also by other factors among which:-

- (1) The education of the child at home and at school.
- (2) The place and environment of the child.
- (3) The background of the family within which the child is part while growing up.
- (4) The 'conscience' of the individual.

as well as (5) The Generation Gap. He provides the schedules for screening (6) The changing trend of family and group relationship and communication are part. He acts as the bridge between and parcel of the child's morality and the Film Censors. He conveys the decisions of the Board to the public and vice-versa.

The Decision of the Appeal and Assessment Committee is final but may be reviewed only upon the direction of the minister and in specific cases may be overruled by the Yang Di Pertuan Agong in his absolute discretion as provided for under the Act. He acts as the Public Relations Officer for the Board (The Malaysian Censorship Board has no post of Public Relations Officer) and carries with him the highest post in the two departments, technical and enforcement. He is the chief of the inspectorate and enforcer of the Act in relation to film censorship. Currently the post of secretary is held by Mohd Haniffa bin Abu who has been with the Board since 1966.

If a question is raised about the showing of a film or part of a film which is prejudicial to the security of the country, such film must be submitted to an Ad Hoc Committee on security consisting of Government officials for its opinion. Only in such a case is a veto allowed to an outside body, binding on the decision of the Board.

#### (v) The Administrative Function

##### The Secretary

In general the job of a secretary to the Board is to take care of the needs of the Board in relation to its administrative function. To provide facilities and requirements to the Boards functioning. The administrative, finance, technical and enforcement sections come directly under the supervision and authority of the secretary.

The secretary is also Secretary to the Appeal Committee



as well as the Assessment Committee. He provides the schedules for screening of shows for the 3 Committees. He is responsible for the minutes of meetings and organization of these meetings. He acts as the bridge between the public who are the film owners and the Film Censors. He conveys the decisions of the Board to the public and vice-versa through the administration under him.

The secretary is also the Head of the General Administrative and Finance Sections. He is in charge of the discipline and promotions of the staff and a guide in their work. He acts as the Public Relations Officer for the Board (The Malaysian Censorship Board has no post of Public Relations Officer) and carries with him the highest post in the two departments, technical and enforcement. He is the chief of the inspectorate and enforcer of the Act in relation to Film Censorship. Currently the post of secretary is held by Encik Rahmad bin Siru who has been with the Board since 1966.

#### Enforcement

The enforcement section is responsible directly to the secretary. Headed by Enforcement Officers, their duty is generally to enforce the decision of the censors upon the film exhibitors. Their duty includes visiting cinemas and checking on the films and whether they have been passed for exhibition. They screen the advertisements on display and the films being shown including the trailers.

When films are being imported, they make sure that

the films are deposited at the respectable customs point and that only authorised films are taken out of the customs warehouse. It is also their duty to make certain that films permitted to be transported is deposited with the Board of Film Censors within the stipulated time period of 24 hours.

The Act amended on April 1980 gives the authority to seize films without the Boards authorization mark, even if they are merely in the possession of the owner unlike earlier when their jurisdiction was only upon films being screened.

#### General Administration and Finance

#### Technical

The General Administration and Finance section deals mainly in the technical section consists of the projectionists. All and the technicians who cut and excise parts of the film, and those who check the films coming in, for damage and quality, and those who check films on the subtitling.

(a) The Projectionists: The work of the projectionists is merely to screen the relevant films to the public like any the censors according to schedule. They run the projector in the theatres and are liable only to screening the necessary films satisfactorily as in any theatre throughout this country.

(b) The Checkers: Also known as the positive of the Board film inspectors, whose job is to check the quality and length of each film reel coming to the censors. There are also those who



cut and excise the films once they are  
viewed by the censors. FILEM

After viewing, the film censors submit one copy of  
their decision to the secretary and one to the technicians. After  
the owner empowers them to cut part or parts of a film, the  
technicians proceed to do so from the secretary's orders.

An example of the report is shown on the next page,  
with the letterhead of the 'Lembaga Penapis Filem Malaysia'.

#### General Administration and Finance

The General Administration and Finance section deals  
mainly in the paperwork of the Board; headed by the secretary. All  
letters, information and financial work is done by the administrative  
staff. Dealing with the registration and recording of incoming  
films as well as censored material, the staff also record and compile  
data of the censorship, answer letters and give out information to  
the public. In short the administrative section is just like any  
other administrative system in any firm or working body.

Finance and its related work is done by the office  
members who collect fees for censorship and all forms of payment to  
the Board. This section submits the Annual Report of its Budget  
together with the estimated financial needed for the forthcoming  
year, to the secretary. Almost 50% of the expenditure of the Board  
comes from the fees collected and administered.

LEMBAGA PENAPIS FILEM

Bangunan Filem Negara,  
Petaling Jaya,  
Selangor.

Date:

Shaw Renters (K.L.) Sdn. Bhd.,  
Lot 11, Jalan 13/6,  
Petaling Jaya.

Owner: Shaw Renters (K.L. Sdn. Bhd.)

Producers: Indonesia

Language: Indonesia

Dear Sir,

Having viewed your film "Intan Perawan Kubu". The Board of Film Censors' decision is that it may be exhibited in Malaysia subject to cuts as outlined in the following paragraph. The suffixes reading ( $\frac{1}{2}$ ), ( $\frac{1}{4}$ ), (beg), (end) denote the approximate positions in reel or spool concerned where the required cuts occur.

Remarks:-

- Reel 3 (end) Reduce scene of Mira taking bath in the nude where her breasts on and off are exposed.
- Reel 4 (beg) Same scene as above.
- Reel 7 (end) Delete on and off scene of a girl exposing her breasts while running in the jungle.

Trailer: Cut to match.

The technicians who receive this copy of the censors report and the relevant reels of the film then proceed to cut or excise



the films as indicated on the left margin of the same report, i.e. (3 cuts, 1 cut). At the bottom of the report these remarks are also added.

"R3 - 976 ft Cutting - 30 ft  
R4 - 907 ft Cutting - 79 ft  
R7 - 1132 ft Cutting - 37 ft  
Tr - 783 ft Cutting - 38 ft "

The film owners are notified together with the notice;

" In this connection I would like to draw your attention to Sections 17, 19, 20 and 22 of the Cinematograph Film Ordinance No. 76 of 1952 of the States of Malaysia.

Should you wish to appeal against this decision, arrangements will be made to convene the Committees of Appeal, Malaysia. The appeal must be lodged within thirty days from the above date hereof and the prescribed appeal fee of \$50/- must be paid in advance.

Yours Faithfully,

(I.M.) Hussain Maricar  
Chairman  
Board of Film Censors  
Malaysia "

Example 2:

Reel 8 ( $\frac{1}{2}$ ) Reduce flashback of a man trying to rape a woman in front of her small son who is being held by another man.

Reel 10 (beg) Delete on and off scene of a man kissing and pushing his head between the legs of a woman who is lying down.

Conclusion

Reel 11 Delete dialogue by a group leader to his men "baru dapat dua kali - bukan main" referring to his successful attempt to have an affair with one of the women held as captives "Kau Mahu cuba, cukup istimewa, siang-siang begini pun boleh".

Trailer: Passed Clean.



### Conclusion

Being directly under the Ministry of Home Affairs, the Board is subject to limitations. Though the work and the Matter of the Board rightfully concerns the Home Affairs Ministry, it would be better for it to be autonomous like the British Board of Film Censors. Even if it were autonomous the Ministry under whose jurisdiction this body comes can have its word over the structure and organization of the Board but should not influence on matters of censorship. Though there is no clear evidence to point out the Ministry's influence on the Board, there are indications that influence has been exerted, at least in one case.

The Boards Quorum being three has a very limited stand on the decision of the censors. Should only 3 men decide on what the whole country should see? This is a very precarious situation especially in the light of censoring films concerning race and religion. With only 3 votes, the chairman's casting vote over and above his deliberative vote inclines the decision to one person's attitude. As such a controversial scene would be decided by one person only according to his own values rather than common consensus. There is then enough reason to increase the quorum. It may involve a greater expenditure on the Board but fairness should not be measured in terms of money. This can easily be levied either wholly or partially on the censorship fees.

The Appeal Committee's viewing panel is well composed though I feel that the conditions of the police officers and

education officers present should be changed. The present qualification for attendance from these departments are either an A.S.P. or of rank above it. He not only must be one who is, or above the stipulated rank but should also be a person well versed in the security of the country and be cognizant of the type of scenes and themes that may affect the security of the country. So should it be with the officer from the education department and all other such invited viewers from their relevant spheres of work.

Being a special case the Assessment Committee and a criticism on it is discussed in the final part of this study. The lengthy discussion on the committee suffices for it to have a criticism and is rightfully done so in Chapter IV.

While the General Administration and Finance needs not comment on their efficiency or systems it need however rectify the one snag in its duties. The only group susceptible to discussion is the technicians. Though it is given that the technicians are well informed of their jobs, it should be remembered that theirs is a job of delicately removing scenes that have been only defined as reduce or cut. To what extent they will not be influenced by their own values during the course of reduction is open to question. So must their value judgements be correct. Will a male technician reduce a love making scene in the same manner as a female, If not why? Above this delicacy lies the fact that they always work alone thus subjecting them to no restraining forces whatsoever from being influenced by themselves.



information which could be CHAPTER III Defence and Internal security must be banned entirely. The Board shall not approve films

THE CRITERIA: FILM CENSORSHIP, THE PRINCIPLES AND such as Horror movies or THE GUIDELINES equivalent which may cause psychological harm to children. and shall have the right to

(1) The Criterion of Censorship

Malaysia under its constitution enjoys freedom of speech and expression through the printed word and the medium of films. However this freedom is not absolute; it is qualified by restrictive clauses provided in several Acts of Parliament. In respect of films Government Censorship has been in force since 1954, after the passage of the Cinematograph Films (Censorship) Act 1952.

The overall effect as well as its aim and tendency. Artistic values in films too must be considered as important and valuable.

The Principles of Censorship

The Board must base their censorship judgements on the following grounds as laid down by the Report of the Special Parliamentary Select Committee on Controversial Films.

The report reads as follows:-  
"Mindful of the serious consequences that may result in the relentless showing of sex and crime films and maintaining good behaviour and morality of our society, the Government must ban the importation and screening of films on sex, crime and violence under those categories mentioned earlier (see Assessment Committee's Exemptions)."

In addition to the above categories, films, the showing of which may be considered unsuitable with respect to Malaysia's relations with other countries or serving as have an analytical perspective, critical and discerning mind in

information which could do damage to her defence and internal security must be banned entirely. The Board shall not approve films such as Horror movies or part thereof or equivalent which may cause psychological harm to children. are laid down for this purpose.

Thus, the foremost consideration in the minds of the censors is not the motive of the picture but the effect it may have on the audience. The censor must therefore always keep in mind that his primary task is to be aware of the manner in which the events are pictured, not portrayed and the context in which they appear and not which they are meant to appear. He thus must not only follow the details but should at all times attempt to visualise the overall effect as well as its aims and tendency. Artistic values in films too must be considered as important and valuable.

#### Guidelines of Censorship

It is understood among censors and the administrators of censorship that it is extremely difficult to draw definite and clear guidelines of film censorship as each film has to be considered on its own merit based on the sensitivities and susceptibilities of the multi-racial composition of our society. The censor is expected to be filled with a total awareness of the local social structure; its existing and accepted codes of moral behaviour, the racial and religious background, the criminal scene and the political setup. In order to be competent in performing his duties, he must be widely read, responsible, upright, conscientious in his stand and he must have an analytical perspective, critical and discerning mind in



order to enable him to make the right decision.

Watertight compartmentalization of rules and criteria for censoring films is both impossible and impracticable. Only broad guidelines therefore are laid down for this purpose.

It is therefore expected that the first and most important consideration in the mind of the censor when viewing a film is the overall effect of the picture on the audience. In order to determine this he has to follow closely the theme of the story and concentrate on its motive. If the theme is unsuitable and strongly developed along undesirable lines and has objectionable sequences the film must be subject to cuts or if cutting is not feasible as it were in unavoidable disruption to story continuity, it must be banned entirely.

Thus the guidelines on censorship work of films are not hard and fast rules. In the final analysis it is the censors opinion that prevails after taking into consideration the circumstances depicted in each film and the merit of each case.

#### Censorable Elements

- Visual - Scenes from films are excised or cut accordingly so as to delete the undesired part from being seen by the audience.
- Subtitles are deleted using a certain chemical so that unwanted phrases are deleted accordingly.

**Audial -** Censorship also includes deletions in

the soundtrack of the film. Words and

phrases are blocked out in the film as

necessary. It is done by the use of a

certain paint like chemical to block

the passage of light through the film

which effects from coming through.

**Sensual/Psychological -** Horror films with scenes

that may shock the audience or give a

long lasting psychological effect are

well scrutinised and censored before

release.

**(ii) Censorable Material**

**Sex**

On viewing a sex film where morals and public decency is involved, the censor should take into account and consider the locally accepted and existing moral and social values and relate these to the filmic theme and content so as to ensure that the susceptibilities and sensitivities of our society are not adversely affected. It is however difficult to define what sex is in filmic form. Sex seen in the context of film is a very wide concept and runs the stretch from simple petting to the performance of the sexual act itself.

To help the members of the Board of Film Censors, the Committee of Appeal or the Assessment Committee in



applying their discretion in determining the suitable from the unsuitable, and to draw the line between the vulgar and the decent, below is the censorship criteria on such scenes and themes.

The general guidelines for films involving sex is that so long as the affected scenes and themes are not immoral and their content not obscene and effects not adverse then the films can be passed for public screening with or without cuts. It must be asserted that not all sex and nudity scenes are vulgar and unhealthy and that these when produced and projected with moral restraint and artistry can add more meaning to a film. However if the inclusion of these nudity and sex scenes are irrelevant and unnecessary they should be deleted. It must be borne in mind that passionate performance of a sex act in the nude, erotic exposure and the manipulation of genitalia and erotic zones of the male and female body oral genital contact, cunnilingus and fellatio homosexuality, lesbianism, sodomy exotomania, nymphomania, fetishism and the like are all to be uncompromisingly removed.

Pornographic obscenity which is trash should be rejected. In accordance with the Parliamentary Committee report on Controversial Films, sex films can be allowed only if they are of educational value such as in the fields of medicine, scientific research, family planning and marital relationship and not otherwise.

Such films as are allowed should be Pink-Certificated 'For Adults Only'. The guidelines for this is that sex films should be clinical in nature set out to instruct and educate rather than to

arouse and contaminate the human mind and morals. Family Planning, Research, marital relationship films and others such as are given a scientific and wholesome treatment can come under this category. For films classified 'Adults' a wider attitude can be given but obscenity is still out. Conversely 'skin-flicks' which are exploitation low budget films concentrating on the erotic without any redeeming features would have to be banned outright.

Violence As an example, an English film entitled 'The Godson' has been banned under this category on the grounds that it is a pornographic skin-flick heavily saturated with scenes of hurtful sex and highlighted with unrestrained and shameless exposure and manipulation of genitalia. Centered on the Prostitution-vice racket, as it is; its theme being morally and socially destructive and content despicable and obscene, this film was thus banned from public screening. Any attempt at classification would in no way detract from its negative and adverse factors.

The ingredients in sex films that ought to be looked into are:-

- (a) Films that depict sex as obscene, vulgar, pornographic, immoral and unhealthy and perversions such as lesbianism, homosexuality, fetishism voyeurism, sadism, masochism, sado-masochism, exhibitionism, incest and sodomy.
- (b) Love that is portrayed immorally unnaturally, lustfully or in some other unhealthy form.



carefully (c) Love that is unrestrained, free or unacceptable ingredients. to the cultural, social or moral standards of violence films our society. However healthy films on sex and may be exhibited love having an educational, medical or cultural value may be allowed for screening either to the general public or to adult audiences as the Assessment Committee thinks fit.

### Violence

Violence and brutality have always been the subject of concern, apprehension and criticism and such an outlook is justifiable in-so-far as excessiveness in violence is permitted. Hence the censor should be cognizant of the fact that scenes of violence and brutality of sadism and torture should be reduced to the minimum. For if shown without restraint it would serve as basis for identification by those with criminal inclinations while at the same time exerting an adverse effect on the younger age group whose minds are easily susceptible to the filmic influence during their formative years. If the whole theme is concentrated on violence and cutting is impracticable, then no effort should be spared to ban the film. This is necessary for the purpose of eliminating the impression that justice can only be achieved through violence as against normal civil processes and also to remove glamour of 'daring-do' that surrounds the manifestation of violence and brutality. In this connection, it must be emphasised that under this category of films, a lot of Chinese 'fist-fighting' and 'sword fight' films would have to be

carefully scrutinised as they often concern the objectionable ingredients. According to the Controversial Films report only violence films backdropped against a social and disciplinary format may be exhibited. More particular criteria of censorship on violence films are as follows:-

- (a) Violence for violence's sake is out. Any portrayal of violence and protracted portrayal of any form of fighting whether with fists, swords, guns or other lethal weapons should be reduced so as to minimise the violence impact. This should include the deletions of excessive gore, brutality and all other forms of pain-inflicting and pain suffering manifestations.
- (b) Vengeful and vindictive violence perpetuated without any human feelings should also be removed.
- (c) Usage of certain banned lethal weapons to cause bodily hurt to victims, should be deleted.
- (d) Excessive portrayal of pain, wound, suffering and brutality, gore, and terrorism whether be exaggerated. Excessive violence should be shown manifestly or implicitly, toned down to a non-offensive level by reduction or whenever necessary by complete deletion.

The careful Censorship of Films portraying violence



would contribute indirectly and ultimately to a reduction of the incidence of violence and lawlessness in our society.

An example of a film banned due to excessive violence is 'Shanghai Thunderbolt'. With an anti-Japanese theme the entire film panders to the racial sentiment stocking up ill-feelings. Fighting and killing sequences and scenes with excessive portrayal of violence and brutality are unduely porlonged.

Another film entitled 'Payment in Blood' was also banned. The violent, brutal and tenious perpetrations by the miscreants of a well-organised under-world gang are criminally inspiring and psychologically detrimental to the criminally inclined. Holding up the defenceless defendents of an eye witness to a murder case, terrorising them into submission and finally kidnapping them to prevent evidence being given in court is also criminally instructive. The censors had no alternative but ban it from public screening.

Ingredients censors look for in violence films are:-

- (a) Unjustified sadism and relentless cruelty.
- (b) Excessive portrayal of pain, wound, suffering and brutality, gore, and terrorism whether shown manifestly or impliedly.
- (c) Unfitigated vengeance, megalomania, deeds pertaining to extreme violence.
- (d) Scenes on expert or new methods in the use of any weapon whether in offence or defence

or new methods or opportunities of law-breaking or countering police methods in maintaining law and order. The implication that justice can only

be achieved by violence as against normal civil processes should also be deleted. However films that depict violence of any form if based on

Historical, Cultural, Educational themes may be

allowed for screening only to such audiences as

the Assessment Committee thinks fit but its

suitability must be judged against the backdrop

of our multi-racial society.

### Crime

When the theme of a film revolves around a criminal storyline, then the censor would have to see whether or not the theme is criminally instructive, encouraging and inspiring and if so consider whether the modus operandi depicted is easily applicable to local circumstances and conditions. If the theme is strongly and seriously developed along criminally-realistic lines, the criminal impact is then heightened, so also its undesirability and unsuitability. Qualifiedly the ending of a film should not convey the message that crime pays. In the filmic presentation justice should finally not only be done but manifestly be seen to be done. And after a process of analysis of these factors should the censor reach the conclusion that the theme is criminally-inspiring and instructive, giving the impression that crime is glamorous and



or new methods or opportunities of law-breaking or countering police methods in maintaining law and order. The implication that justice can only

be achieved by violence as against normal civil processes should also be deleted. However films that depict violence of any form if based on

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it pays to indulge in it then the inevitable decision would be to ban the film, assuming that any attempt at cutting is not practicable due to possible disruption of story continuity.

Crime and its manifestations should not at any time be glamourised and the law and law enforcement should prevail over crime and injustice.

Censorship executed under this category of films is for the sole purpose of preventing such films from serving as a basis for psychological motivations to commit analogous crimes through a process of identification or extension either consciously or sub-consciously by those with criminal propensities. It would also have the corresponding favourable resultant effect of indirectly checking and arresting the incidence of local crimes by controlling criminal influence emanating from the filmic source.

One example of a film banned under this category entitled 'The Split' contains the theme which is criminally instructive and inspiring and strongly developed along criminally-realistic lines portraying, the detailed planning and successful execution of a stadium robbery. The modus operandi far from being remote or far fetched is easily applicable to local circumstances and conditions which serves only to heighten its criminal impact and hence its undesirability and unsuitability for public screening. The film ends with justice not seem to be done either manifestly or implicitly thus conveying the message that crime pays.



of public The ingredients censors look for in crime films are:-

- (a) That it does not show violence as stated under or the obnoxious para on violence above.
- (b) That it does not glamourise crime and the criminal. This nature would inevitably whip up racial sentiments.
- (c) That the theme is not in any way criminally and always has been inspiring, enticing or instructive.
- (d) That it does not portray the law or law-enforcement in a bad light so as to cast doubt and credibility.
- (e) That the modus operandi depicted in the film is not easily applicable to local circumstances and conditions; and that in its presentation, justice should finally not only be done but manifestly be seen to be done.

#### Racialism

The censor has to bear in mind that when assessing the suitability of a film, the theme and content which fall within the scope of this category, he has to relate it to the backdrop of our Malaysian society which is multi-racial in character, with all its attendant multi-racial problems. The projection of any racialistic theme portraying the domination of one race over another either explicitly or implicitly by action or words is subject to censorship. Under the Sedition Act, any words uttered or deeds performed that are calculated to constitute a causative factor in the disturbance

of public tranquility would be a contravention and violation of that act.

The projected superiority of one race over another or the chauvinistic enactment of a particular theme that seeks to glorify or eulogise one race at the expense of another should never be permitted. Films of this nature would inevitably whip up racial sentiments which might lead to interracial clashes. Race is and always has been a sensitive issue and all effort must be expanded to minimise this innate bias both on films and in real life in accordance with the constitution and the principles of the Rukunegara.

One such film banned is entitled 'The Chinese' is objectionable as it inspires a sense of racial feeling. Besides portraying excessive violence and brutality throughout the film, the overall content of the story is also chauvinistic as it tends to arouse racial ill-feelings and sentiment. Cutting any scene is not possible.

Another banned film under this category is entitled 'Goodbye Uncle Tom'. The theme is racilistic and the impact tremendous. It portrays negros being subjected to all forms of torture and humiliation imaginable and being treated worse than caged animals by the whites. White brutality and inhumanity against the negros is shown at its worst. Racial hatred is provoked by this manifestation of strong colour prejudice which climaxes in gruesome acts of black vengeance being perpetrated against their suppressors. The adverse effects of this film is obvious and the film is therefore



prohibited from public exhibition in Malaysia.

Ingredients censors look for in films depicting where there is freedom of religious practice there should also be racialism are:-

(a) Films that portray racial or colour discriminations or those that depict the racial in character. In this regard, the censor is well advised to adopt the principles of the Rukunegara to the very letter, bring contempt on any race.

(b) Films that unjustifiably and blatantly eulogise a single or portray chauvinism at the expense of other races.

(c) Scenes or dialogues inciting inter-racial feelings by reflecting on a people or their institutions or which are likely to provoke sedition or cause a disturbance of public tranquility.

However the Board may if it thinks fit, allow a film for public screening on the merits of the film, provided it has a historical, educational or cultural value but such decision can only be made if it is in accordance with the Rukunegara.

Religion

Religions issues on celluloid should also be carefully scrutinized for points of extremism fanaticism, criticism and cynicism of one religion over another or iconoclasm, blasphemy and any other form of disrespect towards any religion. This is in line with the Rukunegara as the official treatment of Islam should be in accordance with the Rukunegara. Elements that are not in accordance with the Rukunegara should be taken as the official treatment of Islam should be in accordance with the Rukunegara. Elements that are not in accordance with the Rukunegara should be taken as the official treatment of Islam should be in accordance with the Rukunegara.

with the Malaysian constitution which guarantees freedom of belief and worship to all citizens and it is also a logical extension that where there is freedom of religious practice there should also be religious restraint. This is especially important bearing in mind that the nature of our social structure is multi-religious and multi-racial in character. In this regard, the censor is well advised to adopt the principles of the Rukunegara to the very letter.

Any portrayal of the historical development of a religion should be factual and there should be no distortion on points of fact as issues on religion are touchy and highly explosive. Religious themes on films should be done with regard to truth and no departure from this for commercial reasons should be allowed.

Malaysia though not an Islamic state emphasises Islam as the official religion of the state and as such any contaminated treatment of Islam or any new elements that are not in accordance with the teachings of Islam should not be allowed to be introduced into the film.

All places of worship of every religion should be treated with due respect and no commercial advantage should be taken of holy places for filmic portrayals of foul acts such as rape, sex, blatant murder or senseless massacre. No religion should be set at cross-purposes with each other with the consequent triumph of one over the other. Exceptions can however be made when these are of historical value and not too strongly developed on, religiously conflicting points since the effects of such portrayal could be



detrimental to our multi-racial multi-religious society.

An example of a film on religion banned by the Board is entitled the 'Death Master'. The theme is focussed on an anti-religious and anti-social projection of hippy satanic cult worship. The content being adverse and its effects unhealthy and detrimental this film has been banned as being wholly alien to our society.

Ingredients on religion looked for in films by censors include:-

- (a) Films that are anti-islamic or portrayal of activities that are at variance with the tenets of Islam in any form.
- (b) Films that contravene the Government policy of tolerance and freedom of worship.
- (c) Films that condemn, disparage, humiliate or ridicule any religion.
- (d) Films that do not portray a religion in the correct perspective.
- (e) Religious issues such as extremism fanaticism and criticism, pertaining to any religion.

#### Politics

Politically Malaysia while basically a democratic state, is adopting a neutral posture in foreign relations irrespective of whatever is the political ideology of those countries. At the same time she is internally faced with militant communism which is combatted on fronts with life and limb. The solution to this

apparently anomalous situation as far as censorship is concerned regarding films having political themes and contents, would be to eliminate any glorification of communism, the triumph of communism over democracy and blatant speeches or posters that condemn the democratic structure and processes while implying superiority of the communist ideology. It must be remembered that communism is a banned ideology in Malaysia and any dissemination of communists propaganda by whatever means, subtle or militant, manifestly or implicitly is illegal. The Censorship of Films centering around such themes must necessarily conform with Government political ideology and policy. However any portrayal of the communist way of life, their social achievements industries, arts, sports, culture etc. which are not attendant with any political overtone may be permitted.

Communism apart, politically any realistic portrayal of the victory of violence and lawlessness over existing ruling order is heavy censorship material and would have to be seriously viewed as this is contrary to the democratic process which provides for the attainment of political power and office through the secret ballot. Thus films power packed with anti-government and revolutionary themes should be carefully vetted and passed only if it has a historical or educational value and devoid of any adverse influence on the local society.

Propaganda saturated political films could well constitute enough grounds for their rejection if in the interests of National Security, it is justified to do so. The ruling government



should never be placed in bad light through filmic political messages.

An example of a Mandarin film banned on political grounds is 'Heretic Sons and Daughters'. The political theme is strongly developed and the political implications adverse and detrimental to the security of the country. It shows how a United Nation force is successfully ousted from North Korea by the combined efforts of the Chinese Communist Army, and the North Korean Army. The efforts of such filmic portrayal is undesirable as the United Nation with its internationally-established rules of law representing the voice of the world is subjected to abject humiliation by the defeat of its military force.

Another film entitled 'Jubilant Kwongchow' contains commentaries and subtitles that provoke and instigate revolutions throughout the world and may bring highly undesirable propaganda effects on a certain section of the population.

The film 'Ballard of Joe Hill' has its theme as follows:-

"Labour produces all wealth  
All wealth must go to labour."

This prison wall writing in a sequence from 'The Ballard of Joe Hill' adequately sums up the thematic development and content of this controversial film which portrays the sympathetic struggle against oppression and suppression of the working class against the capitalistic class. The theme being politically heavy and inciting and its contents infamatory, this film is deemed not suitable for

public screening.

Ingredients in politically based films which should

be scrutinised are:-

- (a) Films that inspire, instigate, encourage or extol anti-government attitude or outlook or behaviour that contravenes the government's internal or external policies.
- (b) Films that propagate or glorify communism or communist activities.
- (c) Films produced by or made on location in communist countries should be viewed by the Ad Hoc Committee officials on security. However such films portraying the communist way of life, their social achievements in industries, arts, sports, culture etc which are not attendant with strong political overtones may be allowed for screening if the Ad Hoc Committee deems fit.

#### Cultural and Social Values

Anti-social, anti-cultural depictions on films should be watched so that they do not contain any material that is at variance with the principles of the Rukunegara. Hippism and drug abuse are two such elements, destructive and wholesome elements that destroy the very fabric of our society. Favourable public light should not be focussed on these twin evils as by so glamourising



them on screen it would serve to lead astray the less enlightened and more easily susceptible of our youths.

Films that revolve around and encourage and glamourise free love, promiscuity and prostitution and other such anti-social activities and anti-cultural activities should also be viewed seriously as these factors pollute our cultural and social values. An example of a film banned on cultural and social values is 'People Next Door'. The entire film is accentuated on the drug problem which is a menace to our society and a constant threat to its well being. School children are portrayed indulging in drugs and drug trafficking which is attendant with characteristic loose living and manifestation of contempt of the existing moral and social code and with open rebellion and reaction towards any parental attempts in checking their involvement. The theme being morally and socially detrimental and its effects adverse, this film is thus banned from public screening.

Ingredients under cultural and social values that are subject to censorship are:-

- (a) Films that tend to encourage the growth of culture and way of life which is alien to or undesirable or undermines our own and are at variance with the principles of the Rukunegara.

Films that portrays drugs and drug taking and those that glamourise the addicts or entire drug taking in any form. Any scene, gesture

or dialogue which contravenes good taste on matters of religion or sex, or undermines the moral standing or good name of our society.

### Horror

(a) Films that have adverse psychological effects

Horror films are calculated to be spin-chilling and made with the express motive of horrifying audiences in order to thrill them. In the presence of classification, films falling under this category would have to be classified if they are authentically horrific as by classification younger audiences would be debarred from viewing them. It is important to classify these films for the more matured only because children during their early years are psychologically more prone to shock and fear without having the maturity nor the capacity to reason out that films of this nature are only fantasy made effective for commercial reasons and not reality. As such, once the young mind is damaged with this horrifying fear, the disastrous filmic experience will remain a traumatic scar for life.

### Conclusion

Extreme forms of films under this category especially if they are too macabre, gruesome and bizarre should be classified and restricted to audiences of above 15 years of age in order to safeguard the interests of children.

In the history of the Malaysian Censorship Board no horror films have yet been banned. Nevertheless the points to look for in horror films are torture, gruesome brutality, nudity, sex and the like. No effort should be spared to ban or classify



such films in the future if it is highly desirable to do so.

Ingredients in horror films as follows should be deleted or banned if necessary:-

(a) Films that have adverse psychological effects

on children and affects the enjoyment of the

normal film goer such as depicting extreme

cruelty and showing sadistic delight on the

part of those inflicting it and realistic

showing of the infliction of bodily harm on

human beings or animals by torture methods

or other forms of deliberate brutality and

violence. Exemption can however be made when

it is considered suitable to classify and

restrict the screening of such horror films

with or without cuts to those above 15 years

of age.

### Conclusion

The guidelines given though at a glance may seem

adequate and complete but it has its drawbacks. The drawbacks are

the definition of the terms given in the guidelines. Take sex for

example as given in the guidelines below.

"Sex scenes in the context of films is a very wide

concept and runs the stretch from simple petting

to the performance of the sexual act itself."

Being such it is the censor who has to decide on the terms immoral, obscene, adverse, vulgar, unhealthy, irrelevant, unnecessary, ~~leass~~ contaminate the human mind, despicable, unnatural, lustful, ~~I hope~~ unrestrained, and a whole string of related terms.

How then are the censors to decide rightfully and unanimously on these terms, its usage in films and the levels of acceptable reason. Their decision should also rest on their conception of the audience, their feelings while viewing, emotion to filmic portrayal, the viewers collective values, the composition of the audience and the relationship between one audience and another.

One then has to have a complete knowledge of the factors involved to decide accordingly. Since this <sup>is</sup> impossible within the context of the censor involved thus the censor has to assume in his mind that what he feels for the terms also applies to the audience. This however is assuming the impractical because audiences differ in age, sex, maturity, education, lifestyle, interest and ideas. The variance within the audience is poles apart compared to the variance between the three or so censors involved.

As such what censorship really is can be defined as getting the median in a normal distribution curve and the standard deviation consists of equal number of audience for and against the decision of the censors. What the censors then are doing is based on the familiar saying; if you cannot please everyone then please yourself. In reality they are doing what they feel is right and not what the audience wants to see. Here I sympathies with the censors



who are caught in between two mobs with no place to move. However this should not deter them from making an attempt to try to please the majority. What is the majority view? I do not know but I hope the censors do.

#### Classification of Film Censorship

Film Censorship in other countries either differ greatly or only slightly in comparison with Film Censorship in Malaysia. Below is given the brief Censorship classification in some other countries.

##### Australia

Censorship of Films in Australia is done by the Ministry of Customs and excise under the respective customs act. All states in the Commonwealth of Australia give authority to the Commonwealth Film Censors Board and the Film Board Review is the body that censors films for the States. The Commonwealth Film Censors Board includes a Chief censor, a Deputy and five other censors, one among whom is a female. Appointment is done according to the Customs (cinematograph films) Regulations. Their duties include, inspection and registration of films that are imported, checking of films made for television that is made locally by private bodies and not by television companies and to classify such films. The Board reserves the right to reject registration of any film if scenes and lyrics according to the Board can:-

- (1) be derogatory to religion, not moral or if vulgar.

CHAPTER IV

A CRITIQUE AND COMMENT ON FILM CENSORSHIP, TOGETHER  
WITH A COMPARISON OF FILM CLASSIFICATION WITH SOME  
OTHER COUNTRIES

Classification of Film Censorship

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- (1) be derogatory to religion, not moral or if vulgar.



(2) affect chastity or give initiative to the commission of crime.

(3) disturb the feelings of the people of the commonwealth or her neighbours.

(4) be unsuitable for the general public.

The Board judges any film after viewing completely and looking at it from the point of view of art, culture, social and scientific value and effort. The Cinematograph Film Board review is in existence to view appeal by importers against the decision of the Board of Censors. The decision of this Appeal Board is final. In Commonwealth Australia, the Federal Government does not reserve the right to classify films to be screened in the theatres. The classification of films is as follows:

G - General Exhibition

NRC - Not Recommended for Children

M - Mature Audience

R - Restricted between 2 and 6 to 18 years of age

### India

India has a Central Board of Film Censors to censor films for screening throughout India. This Board includes eight censors including the Chairman appointed by the Government of India. The Head Office is in Bombay and has branches in Bombay, Calcutta and Madras. The censor in the Federal Office is assisted by an Advisory Panel whose members are appointed by the Government of India. They

include academicians, doctors, lawyers and social workers who are sociologists.

Each film prior to being issued a certificate is viewed by the Viewing Committee. Under their recommendations, the Board may choose to reject the issuing of a certificate. If the film is passed with cuts and this is not accepted by the owner, he may appeal the film to be viewed by the Revisory Committee. The Chairman of the Central Censorship Board may also claim his decision by bringing the excised parts to be viewed by the Revising Committee on his own initiative. The final appeal can be made to the Government of India.

The certificate issued is classified 'U' for audiences unrestricted in any way. Adult films that are screened to those above 18 is issued certificate classified under 'A' or 'adult'. The Decision of the Board for each film viewed is gazetted in the Government of India Newsletter. The Government of India issues guidelines to the "Examining and Revising Committee". Generally, the guidelines given is with respect to avoid prostitution, immorality, disturbance of peace, violence, lawbreaking and inciting the interests of the Government and its people.

#### United Kingdom

In the United Kingdom, censorship is carried out by the 'British Board of Film Censors' that is, an autonomous body established by the film producers. This Board sets the conditions in other countries, it is not so in Malaysia. As indicated earlier,



that is usually accepted by the local issuer of licences for the screening of a film. This however does not automatically tie the issuer of licences to the regulations but is however usually adhered to. Recommendation is made as to the classification of a film and is left up to the local authorities to follow them. Generally they are used.

In Japan and United States of America, a similar Board of Censors is set up by the film producers.

In Sweden though well known for its freedom and leniency of published sex and pornographic material, has a Board of Film Censors set up by the Government. This Board includes Chief Censors and film censors, one of whom is a children's doctor, one psychologist and one art historian and a film essayist.

Generally every country has a Film Censorship Board which classifies and censors films to be exhibited within that country. This however depends on the respective country as to the degree of censorship and the type of classification.

It is because recent release of films and their rapid change in trend and inclusion of sex and violence have increased tremendously that there is depending on the country a need either to tighten or to exercise leniency in the trend of censorship.

#### The Need for Film Classification in Malaysia

Though it is seen that films are classified variously in other countries, it is not so in Malaysia. As indicated earlier,

the only times when classification was introduced was between 1971 and 1973 when Pink Certificates were issued for audiences above 18 years of age. The other was the general audience certificate for unrestricted viewers. This classification however was not well received by the public and resulted in the setting up of the Assessment Committee in 1973 and after conducting a study it was recommended by the Committee, that the Pink Certificate be withdrawn. The films classified as such were then automatically classified as material to be banned. public was not confused over the meaning and conception

The question that still remains is whether there should be such a classification or is there justification in the decision of the Government to ban the Pink Certificate. Below is given a brief outline of the study by the Assessment Committee and a Critique on the Decision.

(1) The Study by the Assessment Committee

Before we can proceed to outline and comment on a justification or rejection of the decision of the Assessment Committee, a closer look has to be given to the study itself with a critical outlook.

Seminars were held at various states throughout Malaysia to gather the views of the public and requests were made to send in memorandum to the Committee for which purpose a stipulated time period of two months was given from the 25th May 1972 to the 31st July 1972. Response for the requests



came in consistently and when the final count was made, a total of 316 letters had been received from various individuals, youths, parents, academics, religious leaders, psychologists, officials, lecturers, social workers, societies, associations, political parties and interest groups either advocating or condemning the continued screening of the 'X' films. According to the released report memorandum favouring the request to ban such films, outnumbered those urging the continual of the existing code. It is also reported that the general public was not confused over the meaning and conception of the disputed films and the ingredients and their views were in line with their conception of the films. Eventhough the main purpose of the request was to enable the Committee to decide upon the 'X' rated films the letters consisted of more material dealing on violence and crime than on sex and showed that the priority of the public was asking for a raise in tax and entrance fee at theatres for such films, placed heavily on these rather than sex orientated films.

In verbatim report compiled during seminars and meetings too, consisted of the material classified sensorable and these views whether written or spoken can be divided into:

- (a) those that support the continuation of 'X' rated films - without censorship;
- (b) those that support the continuation of these films after careful censorship;
- (c) those that ask for the continuation of the films provided that the Board controls and curtails of:

- Universal
- (1) Censorship
  - (2) Advertisement
  - (3) Theatres and the number of viewers, extent of influence and the towns licensed to screen these films

(2) A Critical Comment

- (4) The age limit and a need for its increase, and
- (5) The standard and the number of films that are allowed to be brought into art and commercial enterprise. Thus in Britain, the "British Board of Film Censors" was set up in 1912. In Malaysia, the

- (d) Those who were for the banning of these films outright without question and delay.

Further suggestions were received from the public asking for a raise in tax and entrance fee at theatres for such films. However assuming the report to be authentic, the largest number of complaints received favoured a total ban on films classified 'Adults'. There were a few who settled for a tighter censorship criteria on these films.

Among the requests in the Assessment Committee's study was included views and academic knowledge of the matter from academicians concerning the situation and in response well known persons in the relevant fields of study gave their opinions though only one was mentioned in the report. Appendix 7 shows a report from Professor Dr. Tan Eng Seong, Doctor of Clinical Psychology at the



University Hospital. Though mainly dealing with sex in films and its influence on human behaviour and mentality, it can well without fail be taken as a general comment on the extent of influence filmic scenes have effect on the human mind.

## (2) A Critical Comment

From the early years of the century with the advent of Motion pictures, doubts have crept into the minds of the viewers as to its impact, influence and effects of such an art cum commercial enterprise. Thus in Britain, the "British Board of Film Censors" was set up in 1912. In Malaysia, the same sentiments were the cause of the first control of the film and its enterprise when the 1910 Undang-undang Panggung Wayang - Bab 83 was in act. In 1952, the Cinematograph (Film) Censorship Act was passed and in 1954 the Censorship Board was set up. The question has always remained in the mind of the State the belief that films could have undesirable effects on those who saw them. In effect not only was there a desire by the state for an accepted code of censorship but also from the other end of the spectrum the receivers of the filmic art - the audiences. An opinion poll conducted in 1973 indicated in Britain that about 20% of the respondents would impose a complete ban on scenes of sex or nudity and on swearing, bad language and blasphemy (Brody, 1977, pp. 4). In a nation wide survey carried out for independent television in 1969, 35 percent of the people interviewed said they thought that

violence on television entertainment was a very important contributory cause of crime and violence in everyday life ... 33 percent attributed equal blame to the cinema as the television (Brody, 1977). Though numbers as these do not show a causal relationship between the screen and its manifest effects, it must however be taken seriously by planners in their approach and presentation to those who have these latent feelings and prejudices, for they are the viewers and their say is the loudest in a customer-businessman relationship, since the art of the celluloid is not only an art but also a gigantic business enterprise.

By far the most realistic comment on film censorship is given by Brody as:-

"Apart from reason of political or practical expediency, censorship campaigns have often relied on the power of emotional persuasion rather than on rational argument."

It is no new phenomena in humans that reactions of others tend to mould his responses according to the perception of him by them. Accompanied by some dire warnings as well as by the expression of more down to earth anxieties publicized by the press and specialists at all levels, and the spread of the mass media, arouse the feelings of persons involved in the scene and produce discontent.

In the Malaysian Context, this can very well be said to be invincibly true and has in practice been very explicitly followed. The method of social study conducted by the Assessment



Committee is deplorable for the data collected and its use as valid in programming censorship is not within the scope of a social research. In research concerning, the national interest and attitude towards an object, the methods of research has to be minutely followed. Composition of the Panel, research as well as conducting, has a very significant bearing on the outcome of a sociological study where value free sentiments and unbiased analysis of the results are of supreme importance.

The Assessment Committee was composed totally of politicians. No mention in the report was there of the research design, the execution of such a research design and the methods of research, the sample or its analysis. When you want to know how people feel about something, what their opinions and motives are, often the simplest and most fruitful approach is just to ask them ... (as was done). For example, through the interview, the investigator can communicate directly with the respondent .... On the other hand the interview has disadvantages too .... As a research tool, the interview may be used for several purposes (a) as an exploratory device to identify variables, suggest hypothesis and guide the phase of the research (2) as the main instrument of the research in which case the questions become items in a measuring instruments rather than simple information gathering and finally as a supplementary tool for other methods of research following up unexpected results, validating other methods and digging deeper into respondent motivations (Franklin and Osborne, 1971, pp 382). The response to

such devices to involve social science research methods and survey methods in furthering understanding of the effects of motion pictures was evident in the setting up of the Payne Fund in New York in 1928 to finance a well staffed series of 12 independent studies. The subjects dealt with, included analysis of the content of a sample of 1,500 films, changes in attitudes and prejudices induced by watching films, children perception of the action and meaning of film stories, their emotional reactions to films and the effects of watching films on sleep. The results of the studies were published in 1933 in a series of volumes together with a summary volume (Brody, 1977, pp 8). A comparison of this study to ours almost 45 years later, gives a most unsatisfactory feeling to the academic as well as doubt as to the motive of the study.

"By gathering information as written in the papers, (Hollander) and views given in memorandum and letters interest in the matter submitted to the Committee itself .... The interests. Committee organized visits to meet the general individuals express in public and they were invited to these places to, even in cases of give their comments and raise their views."

One wonders as to whether the study was itself a deliberate mistake or a deliberate intention to use such 'eye wash' methods to satisfy the layman ignorant in the methods of valid social research. In moderate terms it can be stated that the criteria of the study was on the basis of the 'louder one screams one is right and clear in his views'.



The groups which came for the participation and interviews were fully against the continuation of classified films. These groups can be called reference groups and it is a psychological phenomena in such reference groups to provide social identity, social reality and social support for its members. The seminars themselves were open in their attendance. No form of sample, either stratified or random, was imposed, thus the turnout would be dependent on the prestige-value of a particular group. This is further heightened by the urgency of the situation especially if the situation affects certain groups upholding and preaching against the situation. It is not overly zealous to state then that only certain interest groups and its members turned out full force to challenge the cause. Just as in time of external conflict, the people of a nation show a heightened sense of identity with their country and its cause (Hollander, 1976) so do these groups reflect a greater interest in the matters that conflict with their own values, positions and interests. Further, these groups affect the attitudes individuals express in line with the prevailing social reality that is, even in cases of limited interaction, individuals will be affected by the perceptions of others. Wherever individuals come together to do things they rely on one another for a suitable performance, to the extent that members when rewarded by their attempts to achieve group goals will work towards the goal and will be supported by others (Hollander, 1976). What then is there to show that individuals expressed their own unbiased opinions and values rather than express importance given to their views. To close "It may not be extravagant

the needs of the larger group present. This group composition itself limits the scope of the minority opposition 'group' whose failure to see any importance in the whole make up, have themselves demoralised in the whole debate. It is common for individuals to withdraw from giving their opinions when they see an overwhelming majority speaking against their opinions. Further, fear of scorn by authority and the majority, as well as "the anger commonly aroused by the notion that authority might supersede the power of truth" diminishes their interest to participate. It often happens that a problem of truth is unjustifiably answered by submission to authority. This is also evident from an opinion poll conducted by Nanyang Siang Pau soon after classification, on 11,000 respondents. Where the Committee's report says that an overwhelming response for declassification was received, the poll indicated only 6,200 or a 56% population was against adult films. Obviously a 56% is not a overwhelming majority and only when such marginal results are obtained is it necessary for policy researchers to review their results. To what extent can it be concluded that opinions collected were of value and can be used for the purpose of policy research and as valid material fed back for revaluation of existing policy.

The question still not answered is whether the analysis of the sample was unbiased. The report does not state as to the composition of the researches under the Committee. The involvement of academicians, social scientists and the extent of importance given to their views. To close "It may not be extravagant



to suggest that the operation called interpretation is the central tool of causal analysis in attitude survey research. There is reason to believe however that reports of its use appear in frequently in research literature (Forcese D.P. 1970, pp 271). To mention, the parliamentary report is one.

Where such bad research was done, a minimal requirement would at least be contributions by academics and researchers on this subject. Except for opinion from Professor Tan Eng Seong, no indication of any other form of academic literature was cited in analysis. Corpus data in social research is a fundamental requirement in carrying out studies. References to these research data was given by Professor Tan Eng Seong. The availability of such material is not dubious and the means of getting them was not without the capability of the Committee. Between the years 1930 and 1959 enough research into this field had been carried out all over the world for a United Nations Committee to compile a substantial bibliography of nearly 300 references (UNESCO 1960). Various fields of study have been conducted including attendance at the cinemas and reasons for doing so, analysis of the content of films, the perceptual processes and psychological experiences involved, the influence of films on general knowledge, ideas attitudes, emotional life, behaviour and juvenile delinquency; and the educational and practical value of films. These research material could have been used in the final analysis to bring forth planning and decision making on the basis of what is happening rather than what is thought to be happening.

interest. There should be no reference made as an excuse to the financial aspects involved in declassification that would increase the expenditure of the cinema management in tightening security and scrutinizing the cinema goers and the implementation of the age-limit. This can very well be afforded by the management. Appendix 4 shows the income of the cinema halls in Kuala Lumpur. 85% is from the sale of tickets and 13.3% from advertisements. Income minus expenditure is given in Appendix 5 and the average net profit for 7 theatres is \$406,152.00. Given such incidence in profit margin there should be no difficulty in either establishing a private security system in theatres or a public security enterprise to which all theatres contribute accordingly. Even if theatres fail to contribute, the Government should ungrudgingly do so since the Total Government Revenue from the cinema industry from 1969-72 (Appendix 6) shows a huge income for the state. This includes the censorship fees collected (Appendix 1).

The composition of audience coming to theatres is indicated as one of the major factors making difficult to decide the cutaway point in censorship as well as declassification. Enforcement of the under 18 clause was not stern and thus school children formed a fair section of the audience for 'X' rated films. While there was confusion and dissatisfaction among cinema audiences, it is evident that there were not any surveys conducted under a closely watched and scrutinised system.

Finally, it was on the part of the Assessment Committee's



interest and advantage to use the data and study as authentic. To pacify or at least to provide for the wants of the people, a political motive was behind the whole study. Authenticity was shed aside for provision of wants (to reduce the noise). It would be welcome for us to accept a 'No' as an answer for a valid study due to political pressure rather than a 'Yes' to an invalid one. A similar response as from President Nixon would have been well received rather than to know of the deception of the Committee.

"Whether convinced by these arguments or simply through lack of sympathy with the findings the U.S. Senat overwhelmingly rejected the majority report, as publicly and indignantly did the President, Mr. Nixon."

It is obvious that any social study especially one which will be used in policy decisions has its drawbacks in terms of its findings. There were reports of tense and angry confrontations between 'for' and 'against' factions accusing each other of personal prejudice and of having commercial motivations, at the meeting of the Surgeon Generals Scientific and Advisory Committee on T.V. and social behaviour (1972).

Thus where such sentiments play a part on research findings, it is only advisable so as to cater for the needs of the people and to minimise the harmful effects films may have on the individual, that the present Committee be dissolved and a new study

be undertaken for unbiased research. That any future study conducted be carefully drawn up and be validated in experimental form. As a final word when there are classifications in other countries and its implementation carried out well then it is within the capability of our system to do so fruitfully. In finality it should be within every citizen to view the outcome as unbiased and as a compromise for the good of everyone.

and profession of millions of people and no form of art is more appreciated than the art of the film. Together with the technological perfection pursued through the years in films, the artistic expression too was raised in perfection. As the years grew on in films and filming, so did perfection grow in the hands of professionals and it gave birth to what may be called the highest form of perfection in arts - realism. Just as the Mona Lisa is protected from the public, so must the realism in films be protected from its impact by the state and authority.

Some deny the analogy of the filmic art as akin to that of the fine arts. They say that the process of the fine arts is not mechanical as the filming process (Arnheim 1958, pp. 17). This alone cannot justify their denial. Their arguments are directed on that, the fine arts constitutes feelings, the senses and the whole bodily nervous system unlike the film. If one looks closely at the filming process, one would realize that the filming process is a matter of delicate sensibility. To bring out the various facets of life in celluloid, the photographer, the director and all others involved have to use the five senses to recreate reality as it is.



CHAPTER V

THE FILMIC IMPACT: IN RELATION TO CENSORSHIP  
GUIDELINES AND THE MALAYSIAN SOCIETY

The Film as an Art

The film began as an art. An art that over the years became the speciality and profession of millions of people and no form of art is more appreciated than the art of the film. Together with the technological perfection pursued through the years in films, the artistic supreme too was neared in perfection. As the years grew on in films and filming, so did perfection grow in the hands of professionals and it gave birth to what can be called the highest form of perfection in arts - realism. Just as the Mona Liza is protected from the public, so must the realism in films be protected from its impact by the state and authority.

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Thus the total effect of what is intended is manifest on the screen. The film has been identified with the arts not because of its occasional masterpieces but because of its way of telling a story and showing life, stirs both the heart and the imagination of the viewer. When this realism is neared in perfection only then the impact of it is borne in the minds of the viewer not only while viewing but long after one leaves the theatre, let alone some who will have it within their consciousness throughout their lives as unforgettable memories.

As the average audience does not go to the cinema to appreciate the music, unless it is a musical, or the colour or even the photographic technology, it is within the average person to go to the cinema for the story content which is the theme. Thus the thematic influence plays a role in feature films equivalent to the realism played in horror. The effects and influence of the screen has been great from the day the film and the theatre was invented. In 1915 the film 'The Clansman' which title was later changed to 'The Birth of a Nation' employed severe realistic techniques superimposed on a very natural theme was seen as the first major upheaval of an 'epic'. It was the depiction of war between the North and the South, infiltrated with unwarranted and unethical extras such as racialism and violence. It netted more money than had all the stage plays in the United States during any given five year period and together with it created widespread viewing for it was more than merely a motion picture, it was a cultural phenomena that everyone felt obliged to



witness. Further because of its evident racial biasness, it created enormous controversy, even riots (Ellis J. 1979, pp. 59). Thus just as a very realistic well exposed nude at a museum can stir controversy so does the film during its screening. Its effects may or may not be seen but it must be borne in mind that it does exist but to what extent exactly differs in opinion from person to person and country to country.

#### The Influence of an interesting theme on Children

The thematic influence has been very highly emphasised in the censorship guidelines and I believe it is not without reason that such emphasis is placed on the theme, or story content. The short term effects most influences the child of 8 or 9 who remembers 60% of a film compared to adults who remember less. Children between 11 and 12 retain 2/3 of a film and those 15 to 16 about 4/5. Theme plays an important role because crime and violence have a high emotional appeal and therefore are easily remembered (Sennton, 1965 pp. 27). Those scenes that are unfamiliar are very seldom remembered. Emotional appeal is also highly dependent on the film title. In a study, children were asked to select five films they most wanted to see, what turned up was (1) Blood in the Sand, (2) Gunmen's Revenge, (3) Where the Gun is the Law, (4) Murder in the Air, and (5) Attack at Dawn. This shows the need for children to attend films with story content full of excitement and vigour. Sex differences too make a most surprising effect on the theme of a film. 50% of boys prefer a violent theme compared to only 12% for girls. Given this high

incidence for violent films in the preference list of children, especially boys, the effects of seeing such violent themes and its retention and possibility of replication must be considered.

Since studies in Social Psychology show that there is no definite proof to conclude viewing violence increases violence, it cannot be a major contributor to Censorship of Films on violence. However there is evidence to suggest that the film is most effective when it comes to influencing specific attitudes among a specific type of audience. With this in view it is necessary that censorship has to be tight in its thematic analysis. This has to be emphasised since the general findings (Peterson and Thurstone 1933) of the Payne Fund Research Committee revealed that the films clearly have a prolonged effect on children's social attitudes and that a number of films on the same theme can have a cumulative effect. Studies show too that when angry people watch violent films, there is an inhibitory effect on them, that is seeing someone 'letting off steam' reduces our own need to let off anger (Doob and Wood 1972). This catharsis effect cannot however be totally accepted because there has been contradictory findings on the same plane. The implication was that expression of aggression would produce catharsis only for those people who were frustrated or annoyed or angered, to start with (Freedman 1978, pp. 225). Thus how about those non-angry people? There has been much study on aggression but findings till show either a reduction, increment or no effect phenomena to the responses of watching violent films. What these findings show is of importance



because they determine the censorship guidelines. The censors do not take the findings positively for fear of harm that the findings may show positive results because of faults in research method and analysis. Thus the benefit of doubt is always given to the censors, that is, they have a right to feel that the results though ambiguous are a contributory cause in increasing violence in everyday life.

Psychological effects in children due to seeing horror movies is one of the most necessary fields of study when considering the impact of the film on children. It does not seem however, so, since most research is limited in scope on violence and sex in particular.

Censorship on horror, fear or terror has to be carefully scrutinised. This is to avoid the infliction of strong emotions which the child cannot comprehend or master. Very often children admit that they have been frightened by certain parts of a film and that the fright has sometimes persisted for several days accompanied by nightmares and insomnia.

Much work on violence has been solely directed towards children. This is because violence by nature generally affects children. Adolescents and adults usually are able to control themselves from filmic influence of violence though they may be influenced by other latent filmic portrayal. It can be assumed that the average adult will understand the realism to non-realism in real life and further will be able to extract the hidden messages within

a film more clearly than children.

The problem of censorship still falls on the effects of films on adolescents and teenagers who are most influenced by the screen and its 'culture'. Since the effects of screen culture has taken a wide space in the minds of censors in terms of morality and western influence, let us see its effects on adolescents.

### The Influence of a New Culture (The Adolescent)

Lately, after the 60's, it is agreed that youngsters constitute a bigger percentage of the audience than previously. Adults males and females alike go to the movies, but unlike the youngsters, they do not go once or twice on the weekly average. Thus the regular cinema goers are youngsters who either go alone or with their spouse, friend or mates. Before going to the cinema, they are fairly well informed of the film and its content. It is interesting to know that 32% of them go for shows just because of the star or stars. 30% go for the type of story (Jarvie 1970, pp. 114). Though it may have changed in the later part of the 70's, not too great a percentage difference should be anticipated. Of the total cinema goers those between 16 and 24 constitute the most having a 40% of the total.

What are the effects on these adolescents and youths, influenced by the film. Though the children with the ages 6-12 suffer most psychologically in terms of interpreting the film and its impressions on them, the adolescent however is at a stage to understand and as well try to grasp and mimic or experiment the carefree



idealism of the movies. This form of imitation can be seen in an interview with a 16 year old schoolgirl.

"The setting of the love scenes always held my interest and I've always noted little tricks (which I have put into practice) such as curling my boy friends hair in my fingers or stroking his face exactly as I've seen my screen favourites do in their love scenes. One of the first things I noticed was that an actress always closes her eyes when being kissed and I don't need to add that I copied that too." (Tudor 1974, pp. 82).

While this example is based on a star-oedipus complex, it cannot be denied that the imitation of a star involves not only their behaviour but also a need to copy their attitudes and lifestyles. Only when the following is carried to the extreme, it becomes pathological. Labelling of the pathological could lead to withdrawal into cult behaviour and a new way of escapism.

The recent trends in Malaysia of the rock star cult and the hippy movement of the 70's is similar to the beatles hair-style of the 60's. If of the perceivable impact these examples can be cited then the impression given by the immoral anti-social and anti-cultural activities could very well be followed by those groups who also idolise and glamourise the free love - free sex way of life. A large proportion of females fall for their idolised film stars and their ways. Whether these ways are also followed in latent behaviour

and unseen acts is not yet determined. There is reason to believe that it is true in the field concerning the opposite sex and sex itself. Many quite young girls and boys are interested in love scenes in films and like to re-enact them among themselves, or at any rate try to copy the techniques employed. To what extent does these findings say it is also of anti-social behaviour can only be conjectured. It is only to avoid such positive results or so as not to take any chances that the Censorship Board reduces scenes full of these elements and where it is not possible to censor or reduce they decide to ban it altogether.

According to Blumer, the major source of fear amongst the public comes from the effects films have on the thoughts and attitudes of adolescents or for that matter those with adolescent mentality. Day dreaming and fantasy are two such phenomena that can reduce the scope of thought and outlook of the world. One such example is concerned with wealth luxury, social ambition and success of various kinds. This form of ambition when not realised may lead to retreatism, especially where the social order does not provide for everyone to have everything.

Scenes of romance most stimulates the adolescent and the non-married. For those who have had experiences will judge for themselves the explosion of a minute to imply the heavenly is part and parcel of the art and exaggeration of the film. It is quite common for the dreamer to imagine himself or herself in the place of a particular hero or heroine. He uses the situation presented in



the film merely as a starting point from which he or she creates an entirely new fantasy moulded to the individuals own taste and experience. If there is to be inexperienced audience and the venues are open for them to experience, that is, boy or girlfriend, date etc., the impulse for them to use the film as a guide, is great. In the same context, if it were an 'X' film, the chances of going 'all the way' are there due to the physical pleasures experienced in the cinema, and its arousal. In fact some young men deliberately use films as a means of creating a responsive attitude in their companions because one youth stated that the only time she had difficulty restraining herself from kissing was after a show of this type (Mayer 1945, pp. 160). However to conclude that they are cause leading to rape and molestation would be too far fetched. This could be otherwise comprehended as a way of reducing rather than increasing the act itself.

#### Censorship and the Malaysian View (A Comment)

Film Censorship and the Malaysian Society seem to have met at the cross road. The Malaysian Society on the whole and the Censorship Board in particular has taken the existing social ills to be very highly correlated to filmic influence. In my point of view, the more mundane points in Censorship and its criteria has very much been neglected. The major ills of our Malaysian Society can very easily be picked out. The main one being drug abuse among youths, crimes related to sex like rape, incest, adultery, close proximity (khalwat) and prostitution. Crimes in everyday life such (analogy of speculation). Finally the flame goes out (death to the

as burglary, theft, robbery and such do frequently happen but so do they exist in every society throughout the world. The above mentioned too occur in varying degrees in all countries. To say that these undersirable actions are caused by films is very preposterous.

Take sex for example. Is the mere showing of a nude girl going to arouse a man to get out of the theatre and look for a victim to rape or molest? Or are love scenes the contributory factor in Khalwat and Zina (close proximity and adultery)? A man's desire to have sex or pleasurable time in the dark away from the crowd does not depend on what films he sees. His desire and primarily urge comes when there is an opportunity. Just as learning the ways of sexual intercourse is not taught on the screen, the ways to acquire a partner is not taught by films. Leaving aside rape, adultery and molestation, a simple kissing scene is sometimes reduced because it is 'found' to be too long and too passionate. Here the censors seem to prefer vulgarism or obscenity to passion. Meaning being, while a 'normal' nude girl walking on the beach is censored, a plump girl in a bikini running along the beach throwing her mammary glands side to side is let off free by the censors. Take a tamil films nightclub dance which truly portrays mild obscenity and which may very well induce a man to visit a nightclub and witness a stage show is taken leniently. Analogy portrayal in a film is sometimes carried too far and misses the eyes of the censors. A woman is being raped, a candle is shown flickering along in intensity with the action. The flame is reduced and the milky candle wax is shown dripping to the floor (analogy of ejaculation). Finally the flame goes out (death to the



girl).<sup>1</sup> Isn't it more vulgar to see candle wax dripping than a natural struggle between a man and a woman? One wonders why that particular scene was not reduced or censored. 'Alice Cooper - Welcome to My Nightmare' was truly a nightmare for the audience who brought along their date or spouse or the family. If one thought it to be a mere musical for the total enjoyment of the family, he would have been disappointed. Alice Cooper throughout the show wears a tight fitting leotard with deliberate holes here and there, is dressed up with a 'natural' bulge on his groin area and sings his songs while rubbing his hands over his bulge. The only consolation was that the film was screened as 'midnite'. Further along the show, a skeleton dance portraying 3 women running a broomstick to and fro between their thighs right at the public area was not touched by the censors. I am not wanting these scenes or films to be censored or banned but just asking the censors where they draw the line. Compare the above with this; when a woman taken off her clothes and dips into a pool the scene is censored.<sup>2</sup> I am sure majority viewers married and non-married alike would prefer to let their children see a naked woman rather than a vulgar act. These kind of scenes when censored makes one feel that the censors or the guidelines (which- ever responsible) belong to the victorian era and portray total

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1 Film title: Puthia Varpukkal (Tamil)

2 Film title: Ashanti (English)

illiterate mentality. I wish it to be known that 'filth and dirt' of the human body and relationship is defined in the growing mind exactly the way the elders make believe it to be.

Violence seems to be among the priority list in Censorship Guidelines but violence in itself seem to have been misunderstood in meaning. Extremism is sometimes missed. 'Al Capone' shows a glaring example of brutality and violence without reason and without law and order of the system of the Mafia. Yet 'Godfather' is 'reputed' to have been banned because the censors could not give a reason, as to why a film portraying a corrupt police chief being gunned down by the mafia should not be banned. Chinese films portray a higher degree of violence than any other films. Being such films like 'Big Boss' was screened for sometime before being taken off the theatres.

The crime list in the Malaysian filmic scene has yet not been filled if at all the sole criterion of censorship under this category is "Crime Does Not Pay". Can be considered as valid Censorship Guideline. My point of view differs in that the main influence on human being to conduct and carry out criminal motives is not the already imbedded conception that crime does <sup>not</sup> pay and thus showing that crime does pay is not going to influence the everyday livelihood of our society. In fact, the main view of the censors should be on the criminal methods shown which can influence the criminal to copy and thus conduct a similar act rather than the age old adage "Crime Does Not Pay". New methods that may lead the



criminals mind is the methods that will enable him to get away with it. This stirring stick in the broth of human creativity should be broken and not forbidding the making of the broth.

Morality and teachings cannot be totally indispensable in a film that portrays the western way of life. No film comes into mind that features drug taking as glorious and exemplary, so do immoral living and activities are the Utopia of the modern youth. In nature the drug scene being as or more acute in the western world as in Malaysia would itself mitigate the portrayal and flow of these unwarranted messages. If any, it is part and parcel of the film to exemplify the other related scenes. If at all the staunch following of the Malaysian youth can be classified it can only be called 'aeeping' of an alien culture. Just because there are youths who follow such cultures, one or rather the state cannot totally expect to eradicate these ills by banning films propagating such influences.

Race and religious issues in films have yet not cropped up except in minor form. The American film on Muhammad was banned because it is reputed to have shown the face of Muhammad which is forbidden in Islam. 'Jesus of Nazareth' was intermittently shown throughout Malaysia but on a short term basis. It is not known whether there was pressure exerted on its screening continuously. It is also not known why in the beginning of the film the additional phrase in Malay (subtitle) was added stating that the film is the portrayal of a legend and should not be taken as the truth.

On matters concerning the state and its relations

with other countries, the film 'Death of a Princess' was directed by the Home Ministry to be banned. One other example of high handed action by the government. This can very well be excused because of the Malaysian governments dependence on the Arab countries for their oil, finance and other related trade connections. To let a film jeopardise the stability of our country cannot be foreseen. However not much is known about this film which the Arabs contend has been contorted by the British concerning the relationship between an arab princess and a british subject. Both were sentenced to death.

As mentioned earlier horror films have yet not come under strict censorship and criticism, nor has any been banned.

Generally, the dispute between the public and the Censorship Board cannot be entirely cleared. Nevertheless the efficiency of the Board so far to have kept the public mildly contented is worthy of appraisal but at the same time, the time has come for the Board to review its guidelines and methods of approach in its censorship procedure. To brush up its policies and views since 1972 to the present thought and realities of the 80's is a necessary restructuring process for the Board members and the Home Ministry to bring about and handle. It is also time for them to start a policy of trial and error to provide which was then not provided. To produce such initiatives little by little and at the same time to monitor the feedback. The time has also come for them to call up at the Ministry to slash some unwanted pieces in the guidelines and at the same time provide for a Ad Hoc Committee to be formed to review their guidelines.



A committee to study their views in the light of the existences of the 80's. I feel that the time has also come for the Board to take up the initiative to change their static 'guideline-following' approach to a more dynamic and variable approach. The time has

really come for them to hold meetings from time to time to introduce some radical changes stealthy but surely and firmly for a more healthy viewing and a liberal attitude to be formed among Malaysians on the whole.

Year	Feature	Local	Foreign	Earned
1967	1,137	9,109	2,292	683
1968	2,317	8,801	2,672	838
1969	1,780	10,822	3,421	714
1970	1,625	10,364	6,335	862
1971	1,888	9,886	5,293	501
1972	1,858	10,598	1,822	1,119

\* Data has been doubled since statistics given were for 6 months (July-December 1966)

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Interview:

In depth interviews with the Secretary of the Censorship Board, Encik Rahmad bin Siru.

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